

Bill Gates, Total invest millions in biomass conversion technology

By [Cole Rosengren](#) | September 29, 2016

Dive Brief:



Bill Gates and energy company Total are investing \$14 million in a biomass conversion technology called Plantrose from Renmatix, as reported by Environmental Leader. The technology can work with biomass such as wood, agricultural residues, energy grasses and municipal solid waste. The [Plantrose process](#) involves supercritical water and heat to create cellulosic sugars which can be used in bioplastics or biofuels. This investment will be used for new biorefineries in the U.S., Canada and India to commercialize the technology. Renmatix hopes this will encourage bioproduct developments.

Dive Insight:

Renmatix won a Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Award [last year](#) and has been drawing much attention. Total was one of the early investors in the company last year and this new deal expands their relationship, including a licensing agreement for 1 million tons of annual cellulosic sugar production capacity. Gates has [invested in waste companies before](#) and billed this latest move as a key step toward expanding renewable energy capacity.

"To effectively address climate change, we need to develop an energy infrastructure that doesn't emit greenhouse gas and is cost competitive," Gates said in a statement. "A critical component in this effort must be to decarbonize the industrial sector. Another is the possibility of cost competitive biofuels. Renmatix provides an innovative process that is an exciting pathway to pursue."

[A recent report](#) estimated that the bioplastics market could surpass 6.6 million tons by 2020, driven primarily by markets in Asia and the Americas. While opinions on the types and ratios of material still vary, the interest in this sector is clearly growing. [France recently announced](#) a controversial law that would require certain categories of disposable dishware to be made from at least 50% organic material by 2020 and 60% by 2025.

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