

The Department of Science and Technology affirms that a successful pilot testing of jatropha's viability as an alternative fuel source should have been conducted before going into large-scale production. Thorough testing on a pilot scale should have included planting and harvesting, production of jatropha oil, and converting then blending these to become bio-fuels. This is something that the previous administration failed to do.

DOST Secretary Mario G. Montejo is reacting to news reports quoting DOE Sec. Rene Almendras as saying that the past administration wasted money and resources in planting thousands of hectares of land with jatropha to produce raw materials for bio-fuels.

The DOST recently-concluded pilot production and testing of bio-fuel from jatropha and proved the technical feasibility of producing jatropha oil and converting it to methyl ester.

Methyl esters, or fats from animals and vegetables, were found in previous scientific studies to be suitable as blend for diesel fuel.

"However, technical feasibility is sometimes different from commercial viability because it involves other issues," explained Sec. Montejo.

"The proper scientific protocol in programs involving new technologies such as this is to conduct first a pilot-test and a thorough evaluation of its results to prove its viability before rolling it out," Montejo said.

At present the DOST is not keen on further studies on the processing of jatropha but would still complete the review and evaluation of past data and results. *(S&T Media Service. For queries, pals contact: Raymund E. Liboro 09175839733)*