

## **BrightEconomy column, Rotorua Daily Post, 28 September 2006**

**By Bryce Heard, BrightEconomy Advisory Board chair**

Bio-materials are a central part of the BrightEconomy Board's framework for local economic development.

Since last month's economic forum one commentator has suggested that words like bio-materials are a problem for many people who do not understand what it means. Bio-materials are made from biological raw materials – plants or animals. Wood, wool and cotton are three examples.

Those who doubt that bio-materials will be a massive global growth area should look at the huge and growing worldwide market for products made from bio-materials. In the USA alone, bio-material products sales reached US\$60 billion last year and are forecast to reach \$US180 billion by 2010. Europe is further ahead than the USA and growing faster.

As the volatile price of oil continues to trend upwards, we can expect increasing demand worldwide for bio-substitutes for energy and for materials such as plastics.

Plant material, especially wood, is an obvious source of substitutes, and that's where Rotorua has several major advantages.

Firstly, we have lots of trees. Secondly, we are the home of last century's bio-technology revolution in the forest industry. The Forest Research Institute led the worldwide change from harvesting natural forests to breeding and growing manmade forest crops. So Rotorua has been the world leader in this field before.

Also, we have Scion, the modern successor of FRI, which is well advanced in developing a range of bio-materials.

The BrightEconomy Board is working to bring these advantages together and turn them into tangible commercial opportunities, in conjunction with investors and industry players.

Negotiations are under way to create an Innovative Materials Centre, with funding from both the private and public sectors, to help business investors to turn bio-technology ideas into real, sustainable businesses that will employ Rotorua people and add to the district's prosperity.