

Excerpt from Hispanic Business, June 25, 2007

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## **It's Your Money: Lean, Mean, and Green**

**By Rick Munarriz**

Green investing is a pretty popular market theme lately. No, it has nothing to do with gardening, playing fields, or lettuce. We're talking about Earth-friendly market moves here, but don't stray too far away if you would rather whack a tree than hug it.

This isn't a political topic. Check that. Obviously it's a political hot button, but green investing itself is a bipartisan endeavor. Really. You don't need to have a copy of "An Inconvenient Truth" embedded into your DVD player or drive in a retrofitted car that is fueled by frying oil to get pumped about green investing. Whether we're talking about tax breaks on hybrid cars or hot stocks in alternative energy providers, there is money to be made in making the planet a little healthier.

In short, no matter where you stand on the debate, there is green to be made in green investing.

This isn't a new phenomenon. One of the hottest stocks in the 1990s was Ballard Power Systems (Nasdaq: BLDP). The Canadian maker of fuel cell products captured Wall Street's fancy with the concept of cars running on engines that combine hydrogen and oxygen to create electricity.

Automakers took stakes in the company, with plans for methanol-powered cars. Unfortunately, the solutions were too expensive at the time. Short of a few hybrid buses, Ballard failed to catch on. Oh, Ballard's still at it. However, its stock has been languishing in the single digits for years now.

Other out-of-favor stars in this niche include FuelCell Energy (Nasdaq: FCEL) and Plug Power (Nasdaq: PLUG). Like Ballard, they too are trading for less than \$10 a share as the market tired of waiting for the profitless story stocks to get out of the red and into the green.

These days, the stock market has been mesmerized by solar energy. SunPower (Nasdaq: SPWR), SunTech (NYSE: STP), and Evergreen Solar (Nasdaq: ESLR) are just a few of the many publicly traded makers of solar panel makers. Posing a potential quandary, many of the popular solar energy companies are based in China.

If you're not up to picking a single name or two, there are also funds that specialize in green stocks. PowerShares WilderHill Clean Energy (Amex: PBW) is an exchange-traded fund that snaps up stakes in alternative energy stocks. With a cross-section of solar and wind power specialists, as well as ethanol producers, fuel cell champions, and other renewable energy providers,

the fund's got the green space covered.

Still not sold? Still think that this is a political phenomenon? Let's go out for a drive together. Count the hybrid cars. Pull into the pump and gauge the general reaction of driver reactions to \$3 gallons of gasoline. The trend is all too real. The appetite for environmentally appealing lifestyles is too strong for any investor to ignore. So no matter what side of the fence you may be standing on, the investing is always greener on the other side.