

# Delta Democrat Times



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## Much ado about bamboo

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STONEVILLE — David Knight, CEO of Washington-based bamboo manufacturer Teragren, told a gathering of the Delta bamboo supply chain on Tuesday that his company wants to locate a facility in Greenville.

This would mean hundreds of jobs and a sustainable economic impact on the area, but there are a few roadblocks preventing this from happening immediately, he said.

"There is an economic risk because the land used to grow bamboo will be fallow for several years," Knight said. "In other words it won't generate any money for a few years."

During the question and answer portion of Teragren's presentation, several suggestions surfaced about interim strategies until a fully functioning manufacturing facility and farm land could become a reality.

Some of the suggestions included shipping foreign grown products, having local farmers offer their land or having publicly owned land designated for bamboo production. "We don't have all of the answers and we know that there are some risks involved," Knight said. "But, we do want to locate a facility in Greenville and whether that happens or not depends on several factors. But it will happen somewhere."

Bamboo is a fast-growing woody plant that can take three to seven years to mature enough for manufacturing.

Most of the world's bamboo is native to the Far East, where Teragren has one of its largest manufacturing facilities in Zhejan Province, China.

It is a product that fits into the green revolution, and Knight said that the Delta is perfect for the crop.

"The soil is rich and there is plenty of water," he said. "The temperature and the growing seasons are ideal so I see no reason why we couldn't grow bamboo here."

Teragren provides bamboo for manufacturers of wood flooring, furniture, cabinets, counter tops and even fully-framed bamboo houses.

In its 15-year existence, Teragren has seen its profits double virtually every year.

"Right now, we're a big fish in a small pond," Knight said. "We make up about 17 percent of the bamboo industry in country."

Knight said that in the most expedited scenario, bamboo could be planted in the Delta by spring 2010 with a manufacturing plant four to five years later.