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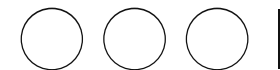
LOCAL // SPACE

Houston company could provide answer to Elon Musk's \$100 million question



Andrea Leinfelder, Staff writer

Jan. 29, 2021 | Updated: Jan. 29, 2021 1:15 p.m.



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Houston-based Cemvita Factory co-founder and CEO Moji Karimi in front of the company's photobioreactor on Tuesday, Jan. 26, 2021. Karimi hopes his company will win the \$100 million funding being offered by Elon Musk to the company with the best carbon capture technology.

Elizabeth Conley, Houston Chronicle / Staff photographer

Moji Karimi's phone started buzzing. Messages poured in through text, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Twitter; basically any avenue where friends and family could share Elon Musk's \$100 million tweet.

The Tesla co-founder and CEO – and world's richest man, per Bloomberg – pledged to donate

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But his other priority, as the founder of SpaceX, is colonizing Mars. And there, the atmosphere is roughly 95 percent carbon dioxide.

Karimi, the co-founder of Houston-based Cemvita Factory, has a carbon capture and utilization system that could fit both priorities. Its technology



Elon Musk, founder of SpaceX and chief executive officer of Tesla Inc., speaks during a discussion at the Satellite 2020 Conference in Washington, D.C., on March 9, 2020.

Andrew Harrer, Bloomberg / Bloomberg

When traveling to Mars, astronauts must take – or create – their food, water, oxygen and rocket fuel. This has researchers scrutinizing which Mars assets could be repurposed for survival.

On NASA's Perseverance rover, for instance, which

Karimi believes Cemvita Factory's carbon capture and utilization system could complement these technologies. His device would turn carbon dioxide into sugar, which could be eaten by the astronauts or used as an ingredient to make other nutrients, such as vitamins and proteins.

systems to create ethylene, but it's also found in nature. For instance, ethylene is a gas emitted as a banana ripens.

So to turn carbon dioxide into ethylene, Cemvita

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BY AMANDA DRANE

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