



New eco-surfboard hopes to catch wave of popularity

March 28, 2009 (CNN) -- An environmentally-friendly surfboard has taken to the waves after five years in development.

British professional surfer Mark "Egor" Harris was one of the first to try the British-made board at Fistral beach in Cornwall, England, giving its performance and eco-credentials the thumbs up.

"It felt good and I can see these boards being popular with surfers. We spend a lot of time on the beach and in the sea and surfers have been campaigning to clean up the oceans for years. This board goes hand-in-hand with that philosophy," said Harris.

The surfboard has been in development in the south west of England for five years and is the culmination of a collaboration between the Eden Project gardens and biosphere and three local companies.

Chris Hines, former sustainability director of the Eden Project and a lifelong surfer and committed environmentalist came up with the idea for the board when a balsa tree had to be taken down in the rainforest biome.

"I said, well, let's make a completely sustainable surfboard, because I knew people who could laminate in hemp cloth and plant-based resin, so we went for it. It was a eureka moment: we thought, let's really have a go, let's really see what we can do," he told CNN.

Hines and the Eden Project team soon realized that balsa and hemp cloth were too heavy for commercially viable surfboards, but desire remained to produce a surfboard that reduces the reliance on petroleum chemicals and uses more sustainable materials.

The Eden team worked with local company Homeblown to create a new type of foam core for the eco-board, 15 to 20 percent of which is made from plant derived material.

Completing the use of local companies, the boards are being manufactured by surfboard shapers, Laminations. Junior British surfing champion Tassy Swallow is set to compete at the International Surfing Association World Junior Championships in Ecuador on a new Eden surfboard.

"It's a really good board, it worked really well," said Swallow after her first outing on the board. "It feels a lot more buoyant in the nose which makes it easier to catch waves. It will really catch on when people realize that it's as good as a regular board."