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THE RACE FOR BIOFUELS

How long before biofuels are at all local gas pumps and where will they come from?

(New Orleans, LA) – Researchers have been studying Agro fuels from biomass for years. Now, with growing dependency on foreign oils and an energy conscious society emerging, biofuels are fast becoming part of a fuel revolution that could actually reach pumps all across America.

Ethanol blends are already available at local gas stations. However, they are more readily available in the Midwest than they are in various other states, like Texas, where not much ethanol is currently produced. *“To see it everywhere, we have to make more of it on a regional basis,”* says Dr. Bill Rooney, Professor, Plant Breeding and Genetics, Soil & Crop Sciences Department, Texas A&M University.

Sources of biomass for biofuel production in each state will likely vary widely. *“There is no favorite source. The best choice is contingent on environment, growing season, water and fertility availability, abiotic and biotic stress resistance, processing and conversion technique. In any location, there will be several species that will be grown for biomass,”* Rooney says.

Grain sorghum can be used as either a feed or food grain, or it can be used in ethanol production. Approximately twenty percent of grain sorghum production is now used for ethanol production. Dr. Rooney is currently developing sorghums specifically for energy production and not to be used as animal feed.

Hear more from William Rooney, Wednesday, November 7, 2007, during his oral paper presentation, *Sorghum Breeding for Bioenergy Traits*, at the International Annual Meetings of the American Society of Agronomy (ASA), Crop Science Society of America (CSSA), and the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA). He is the last presenter at 2:30 p.m. during the Breeding and Genomics of Crops for Bioenergy Symposium, Convention Center, Room 207.

Another presentation related to biofuels, *Sweet Fuel for the U.S.*, will be presented by Dr. Jorge Da Silva, Associate Professor, Molecular Genetics and Plant Breeding, Soil & Crop Sciences Department, Texas A&M University, November 6, 2007, 10:15 a.m.. Dr. Da Silva's presentation will be during the Agronomic Aspects of Biofuel Crop Production: I Symposium in Room 214 of the Convention Center.

He says, *“Production of energy, such as ethanol, from sugars is more efficient than production from grains, in both cost/btu and energy input/output efficiency. Sugarcane is ranked in first place among all other crops for biomass production and can be a key component of that biomass supply. Technology for producing ethanol from sugarcane is well established in tropical countries such as Brazil, where energy independence has been achieved.”* Like Rooney, he also believes that demand will drive the market.

Although there is no finite development timeline, as the cost of petroleum reaches previously unimaginable levels, reserves diminish, and environmental concerns soar, there is clearly a race for biofuels. A race, if won, could bring about a revolution as large as Henry Ford's creation of the Model T.

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If you'd like more information about this topic, please call Jorge DaSilva at 956.968.5585 or Bill Rooney at 979.845.2151 or email Tami Hons at t-hons@tamu.edu, Communications, Soil & Crop Sciences Department, Texas A&M University.