
Cellulosic Ethanol Highlighted at Workshop

Washington, DC, December 11, 2006: Based on the range of technologies in advanced stages of development, ethanol production from cellulosic biomass and waste is likely to succeed through a variety of paths according to information presented here today.

An invitation-only workshop held by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in cooperation with the Clean Fuels Development Coalition included presentations by 11 different companies engaged in biofuels research, development, and demonstration. Enzymatic, acid, microbial, and several thermal conversion technologies were represented.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 has provisions authorizing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to carry out a variety of tasks related to the development of biofuels and bioproducts. The Act specifically authorizes the Agency to provide loans, loan guarantees, and grants for renewable fuel production technologies with an emphasis on states with low rates of cellulosic biomass ethanol production. EPA is also directed to establish the Advanced Biofuel Technology Program to "fund demonstration projects to develop not less than four different conversion technologies for producing biomass ethanol."

"We are extremely pleased with the content and quality of the information presented at today's workshop," said Douglas A. Durante, Executive Director of the Clean Fuels Development Coalition. "There are great strides being made in all of the different paths and it is becoming increasingly clear there are indeed a number of different methods of producing ethanol from cellulose," he said.

The constant message that emerged from all the presenters was that conventional financing was simply not an option for these first-of-a-kind production facilities. Loan guarantees, repayable loans, and equity positions were identified as the kinds of financial tools that would be of the most value to many of these technologies. Capital markets and the financial community have expressed a great deal of interest in biofuels production, but are not likely to take on more risk than necessary according to many of the presenters.

"EPA is investigating how to best meet the directives of the Energy Bill and putting them in direct contact with those on the front lines of technology development is a great start and this workshop was everything we could have hoped for," said Durante.

CFDC will work with EPA in reviewing data submitted at the workshop to produce a final report. The focus will be more on program direction than specific funding of any particular technology according to CFDC officials.

"With an emphasis on CO₂ reduction and climate change, we believe biofuels will play an increasingly important role in EPA programs," said Durante. "We look forward to continuing to work with the Agency and appreciate the opportunity to coordinate with them on this important workshop."

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CFDC is a nonprofit organization comprised of agriculture organizations, ethanol producers, automobile manufacturers, and design and technology firms supporting the use of cleaner burning fuels and fuel additives.