

## Soybeans Feed and Fuel Americans

Written by American Soybean Association  
Monday, 12 July 2010 08:06

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Soybeans aren't just for eating anymore. In addition to numerous industrial uses that are being researched every day, the oil from soybeans is contributing to U.S. energy independence, creating rural employment opportunities and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. When soybeans are processed, they are crushed to extract the oil from the meal. Soybeans are produced primarily for their 80 percent meal content, but biodiesel is produced from the soybean oil, a commodity that has historically existed in surplus.

Biodiesel, a homegrown renewable fuel, has also provided a significant market opportunity for rural communities, and its production contributes additional employment opportunities and economic stimulus in both urban and rural areas.

Biodiesel holds great promise for helping reduce U.S. dependence on foreign sources of energy. Every gallon of domestically produced biodiesel consumed is one less gallon of petroleum diesel that has to be imported. For the sake of national security and economic security, the U.S. needs to be developing the resources we have at home to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Biodiesel has some of the best energy and environmental profiles of any alternative fuel. A U.S. Department of Energy and U.S. Department of Agriculture full lifecycle emissions study found that for every unit of fossil energy needed to make biodiesel, 3.5 units of energy are gained. In contrast, it takes 1.2 units of fossil resources to produce 1 unit of petroleum diesel.

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In addition to boasting a positive energy balance, biodiesel significantly reduces emissions of carbon monoxide, particulate matter, unburned hydrocarbons and sulfates. On a lifecycle basis, biodiesel reduces carbon dioxide by 78 percent compared to petroleum diesel. One billion gallons of biodiesel, the amount the expanded Renewable Fuel Standard calls for to be used annually by 2012, will reduce current lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions by over 16 billion pounds – the equivalent of removing 1.4 million passenger vehicles from U.S. roads.

Not only does the fuel make for a healthier environment, biodiesel blends also help improve human health and reduce chronic disease. Particulate matter is reduced with biodiesel blends, thereby lowering air pollution and reducing illnesses and death caused by asthma, lung cancer, and other respiratory diseases.

The increased use of biodiesel does not take away from the world's food supply, but actually creates more food and feed to meet its growing demand. All commodity soybeans are processed using the same basic crushing and extracting methods, regardless of how the soybean meal and soybean oil will ultimately be used. Only the soybean oil is used for biodiesel production.

The key point to understand about the relationship between soybeans and biodiesel production is that as the demand for soy biodiesel increases, the amount of soy protein available will also increase. An easy way to think about this is that for every 1.5 gallons of biodiesel produced, there will be more than four times as many pounds of protein-rich soybean meal available for animal and human consumption.

Earlier this year, General Motors announced that its new lineup of heavy-duty pickups will have B20 biodiesel capability, and Enterprise Holdings announced plans for its entire fleet of more than 300 Alamo Rent A Car, Enterprise Rent-A-Car and National Rental airport shuttle buses across more than 50 North American markets will begin using at least B5. These are just two of the latest in a long list of companies who have realized the benefits of investing in biodiesel and are helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, move toward U.S. energy security, and support rural jobs.

The American Soybean Association (ASA) is working for immediate enactment of a retroactive extension of the biodiesel tax incentive, which expired Dec. 31, 2009. The one dollar per gallon biodiesel tax incentive is structured in a manner that makes biodiesel price competitive with petroleum diesel fuel in the marketplace. Lapse of the biodiesel tax incentive is costing U.S.

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jobs and stifling production. In 2009, the U.S. biodiesel industry supported 23,000 jobs in all sectors of the economy. This added \$4.1 billion to the nation's Gross Domestic Product and generated \$828 million in tax revenue for federal, state and local governments.

ASA's farmer members are proud of the contributions they are making to grow an abundant and safe food and feed supply, reduce the nation's dependence on imported petroleum, and enhance the environment for future generations.

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