



# Washington Wants To Know

## Creating Jobs And Reducing Reliance On Foreign Oil

(NAPS)—If the country had a way to reduce reliance on foreign oil and create well-paid production jobs that could not be exported, it might seem like a natural commodity to invest in. Congress decided just three years ago that it made economic sense to help Americans grow and refine biofuels—high-energy liquids that are derived from agricultural crops or forestry waste. This renewable source of energy is expected to create jobs and help meet the nation's energy needs in a sustainable way.

Meeting the goals established by Congress for producing biofuels requires new crops that add to the corn and soybeans currently being used. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has identified a number of potential sources, including:

- Native prairie grasses, such as switchgrass, big bluestem, Illinois bundleflower and purple prairie clover
- Hybrids, such as perennial *Miscanthus giganteus* (giant *Miscanthus*)
- Oil seeds, such as camelina
- Woody biomass, such as fast-growing hybrid poplar trees.

Other potential biomass crops include algae, jatropha (an oil seed), and energy cane (a form of sugarcane).

The USDA, at the end of last year, finalized rules and began



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implementing the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) and the Biorefinery Assistance Program (BAP), to help farmers and bioenergy producers grow and refine such sources of energy, but the House of Representatives recently proposed cutting the money for these programs from the 2012 budget.

The Biomass Crop Assistance Program, which gives financial assistance to farmers planting new bioenergy crops, is expected to create an estimated \$88.5 billion in economic activity and 700,000 jobs by 2023.

BCAP project areas have been

established in 10 states—Arkansas, California, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Washington.

The Biorefinery Assistance Program, which helps companies secure private loans to finance construction of biorefineries, is helping companies to build new biofuel facilities in rural areas. This year, under this program, the USDA announced loan guarantees to three biorefineries in Alabama, Mississippi and Florida, expected to generate 1,000 jobs. The announcement of four to five additional loan guarantees is expected. BAP's estimated cost in next year's budget will be \$150 million.

"Renewable, homegrown, clean energy from American producers is vital to our country's energy future because it reduces our reliance on foreign oil and creates good-paying production jobs that cannot be exported," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

Vilsack expects that such clean energy will make a significant contribution to rural America and create new jobs, demonstrating the great economic potential that the production of renewable energy holds for our rural communities.

You can contact your congressional representatives and let them know how you feel about this or any other issue.