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Arkansas SoyEnergy Opens Biodiesel Facility in DeWitt

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Arkansas SoyEnergy Group LLC on Tuesday marked the opening of what it says is the "first and only" biodiesel facility in Arkansas with an on-site crusher, making it capable of taking locally-grown soybeans "from the field to the fuel tank" at one location.

The facility, at Arkansas SoyEnergy's DeWitt plant on 2780 Highway 165 South, began operating in mid-2007, and fuel production will begin in April.

Arkansas SoyEnergy said its fuel production facility has the capacity to make 3.5 million gallons of biodiesel now, and can be expanded up to 10 million gallons. The facility is designed to produce cost-competitive biodiesel and other byproducts, and be a "significant contributor to the economy of Arkansas County and southeast Arkansas."

"It is time for America to take ownership of its energy problem as a nation and develop domestic fuels that can meet our nation's energy demand in the future," U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln, a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said in remarks prepared for the opening. "Arkansas SoyEnergy's new biodiesel facility will take great strides toward producing renewable fuels more efficiently, while creating new markets for our farmers and bringing more jobs to the region."

Arkansas Business [Reported On Arkansas SoyEnergy's Plan Early Last Year](#). The firm is owned by brothers Jon, Jeff and Troy Hornbek.

With the new plant, the Hornbecks aim to create a new market for area farmers by buying and crushing locally grown soybeans, saving their neighbors the heavy toll of transportation costs while providing "homegrown energy" that can be used in farm machinery and vehicles. A byproduct of the process, soybean meal, can be used for animal feed.

Jon told Arkansas Business last year that the plant will get most of its soybean feedstock locally.

"The main purpose is for area farmers to have a better market," Jon said.

The idea for the small biodiesel plant - it will start with about 3 million gallons a year with plans to eventually ramp up to 7 million gallons - came during a trip to Argentina. While visiting a research company they do business with, the brothers heard about a remote biodiesel engineering subsidiary that had built a soy-diesel plant because it was cheaper than bringing in fuel. The plant not only provided B100 - 100 percent soy-diesel - for its own vehicles, but made money.

Troy said setting up a soy-diesel plant was simply a smart thing to do. By capturing soybeans from an area that extends no more than 30 miles from DeWitt, they and their suppliers can avoid expensive freight charges. Plus, they can sell fuel back to the same farmers who are selling them the raw soybeans.

"That helps the local farmers and the local economy," Troy said.

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