



Powered by  Clickability

## Officials welcome state's first biodiesel plant with crusher in DeWitt

Wednesday, Feb 20, 2008

### Arkansas News Bureau

LITTLE ROCK - Arkansas farmers and elected officials on Tuesday welcomed to DeWitt a unique biodiesel plant that will process soybeans grown by local farmers, who later will be able to purchase fuel made from the beans.

The Arkansas SoyEnergy Group's plant is the first in the state with an on-site crusher, used to extract soy oil from the beans. The oil is then put through a blending and refining process, through which biodiesel can be made, as well as other products, like cooking oil, to help the plant weather varying market conditions.

"Developing new markets as well as sustainable forms of domestic energy is crucial to the success of the local economies in Arkansas," said U.S. Rep. Marion Berry, D-Gillett, who co-chairs the congressional soybean caucus.

Arkansas SoyEnergy Group, which began operating last year and will start fuel production in April, is part of the Hornbeck Agricultural Group, owned by three DeWitt brothers.

Arkansas SoyEnergy is the state's first biodiesel plant that uses only soybeans as its feedstock, and it can process approximately 2.75 million bushels annually.

The plant plans to buy soybeans grown in a 35-50 mile radius, according to Troy Hornbeck.

Arkansas is the nation's eighth-largest soybean producer.

"We need this facility, as well as others around the state, to succeed in order to have a stronger economy in our state," state House Speaker Benny Petrus, D-Stuttgart, said.

The plant currently has the capacity to make 3.5 million gallons of biodiesel annually, but could eventually produce up to 10 million gallons by combining oil produced onsite with oil from other suppliers, officials said.

About 250 million gallons of biodiesel was produced in the U.S. in 2006, according to the National Biodiesel Board.

The plant will employ up to 20 people, officials said. Arkansas SoyEnergy will benefit from the Arkansas Alternative Fuels Development Act, passed by the Legislature last year, which made \$16 million available for grants to companies that make biodiesel from soybeans or wood products.