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Biodiesel Workshop Answers Questions

DOTHAN – Today the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition hosted a biodiesel workshop at Troy University-Dothan to provide local municipalities, fleet owners, citizens, universities and the media with an understanding of the basics about biodiesel as an alternative fuel for transportation. The workshop was designed to provide a basic overview of biodiesel, explain the quality steps in production and educate attendees on available incentives to convert from petroleum diesel to biodiesel. In addition producers and users of biodiesel were on hand to provide “real world” information and answers to attendee’s questions. The workshop was the second Alabama workshop this year sponsored by the United Soybean Board Checkoff and put on by the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition.

Mark Bentley, Executive Director of the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition, advocated biodiesel fuel as a viable alternative to foreign petroleum used in our diesel on and off road vehicles. He was pleased with the turnout for Wednesday’s event and is looking forward to continuing the educational workshops across the state, saying “Alabama and the nation have the opportunity to run our diesel vehicles on biodiesel made domestically from vegetable oils - soy, canola, cottonseed, peanut as well as animal fats and even processed cooking oil.”

Possibly one of the best advantages of biodiesel as an alternative fuel is that it can be used in any diesel engine without any conversions. Thus, cost-conscious consumers are able to switch seamlessly between traditional diesel and biodiesel blends depending on price, with the only noticeable difference being an increase in power from filling up with the higher-Cetane biodiesel blends along with more eco-friendly emissions.

“Once government officials, businesses, and fleets learn about the quality and availability, they often begin thinking about how they could implement it into their business models,” Bentley said. “Then when they learn about the incentives available, the only other question we get is ‘where do we sign up?’”

Seminole Biodiesel (Bainbridge, GA) produces and distributes quality biodiesel across the southeast. Roger Whitworth is Plant Manager of the Bainbridge facility and spoke at today’s event. “I wanted to emphasize the importance of quality in the biodiesel production process and conforming to ASTM fuel standards.”

Creola (Mobile) Alabama based Southeastern Biodiesel Solutions', Dylan DeBiasi, provided an overview of their biodiesel production efforts and distribution across the country.

The City of Enterprise produces biodiesel using waste vegetable oil (WVO). Jimmy Kilgore, the city's Public Works Director, attended the event and shared his real world experience with biodiesel production utilizing WVO and how the resultant fuel helps his community save money on fleet costs and maintenance.

Bentley led an informative discussion about what present actionable information is available on alternative energy funding and incentives.

Bentley concluded by saying "When people come to these meetings, we hope they learn about domestically available biofuels, like biodiesel, and how we can make them reliable sources of energy now and into the future. Currently the USA sends over a billion dollars a day to other countries to purchase petroleum; we need to invest in America by using readily available alternative transportation fuels. We can then reduce our dependence on foreign oil, create US jobs and improve our state's and nation's air quality. "

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The Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition is the state's leading advocate for alternative fuels. The promotion of clean, renewable, domestic energy sources helps reduce our dependence on foreign oil, improves local air quality, and increases economic development investments in our local communities. For more information, please visit our website at www.alabamacleanfuels.org or call us directly at 205-402-2755.

Funding for the Biodiesel Workshops is provided by the Soybean Checkoff.