United States Department of Agriculture

USDA Accomplishments 2009-2012

Secretary Tom Vilsack

Energy

To create jobs in rural communities, drive economic growth, and help reduce our dependence on foreign oil, USDA is aggressively pursuing investments in renewable energy.

Support for Growers, Landowners and Producers of Renewable Energy Feedstocks

- To encourage feedstock production for renewable energy, USDA established a program to incentivize hundreds of growers and landowners farming nearly 59,000 acres in 188 counties to provide biomass to energy conversion facilities.
- To reduce the risk for farmers looking to produce biomass for renewable energy, USDA offers insurance coverage for farmers growing biofuel crops like switch grass and camelina and we are helping identify American farmland most suitable for growing energy crops.
- In USDA's National Forests, we contracted with private businesses to remove 3.7 million tons of biomass to produce energy.
- Completed a Biofuels Roadmap identifying barriers to and proposed plan of action to meet congressionally mandated RFS2 goals for national biofuels production.
- Coordinated six regional research centers to work on the science necessary to ensure profitable biofuels can be produced from a diverse range of feedstocks across the nation, not just in the Midwest where the industry is already thriving.
- Since 2009, USDA has invested about $320 million to accelerate research on renewable energy ranging from genomic research on bioenergy feedstock crops, to development of biofuel conversion processes and costs/benefit estimates of renewable energy production.

Investments in Renewable Energy Production

- Since 2009, the Forest Service Woody Biomass Utilization Grant Program funded more than 150 projects to create new jobs through the use of renewable woody biomass for energy generation and other uses.

- USDA has helped lead an effort to promote the domestic production and use of advanced biofuels with the potential to create hundreds of thousands of jobs in rural communities. Invested in research, supported farmers growing bioenergy feedstocks, and helped support hundreds of bioenergy and renewable energy projects nationwide.
- Through our Biorefinery Assistance Program, we are supporting efforts to build 9 biorefineries to produce advanced biofuels in states from Florida and Michigan to New Mexico. We are supporting facility upgrades and feasibility studies for advanced biofuels projects in every region of the country.
- To encourage the production of advanced biofuels from non-food sources, USDA made payments through our Advanced Biofuel Payment Program worth approximately $190 million to over 200 companies already producing biofuels from non-corn feedstocks in 44 states.
- USDA funded enough renewable electricity generation projects between 2009 and 2012 to power more than 120,000 homes – including more than 380 wind energy projects.
- Provided financial assistance for blender fuel pumps so drivers can pump fuels with higher ethanol mix into their gas tanks. These programs provided financial assistance to help support over 250 blender fuel pumps.

Support for Aviation Biofuels

- We have forged partnerships with the FAA and the aviation industry to promote aviation biofuels to help meet our nation's energy needs, combating global climate change, and fueling economic growth. The national work is being expanded at the regional and state level. Last year, two commercial airlines flew their first domestic flights powered by biofuels.
- USDA invested more than $80 million in research focused on developing aviation biofuels.
- We entered a partnership the Department of Energy and U.S. Navy to invest up to $510 million during the next three years to produce advanced, drop-in aviation and marine biofuels to power military and commercial transportation.
- We have invested in a New Mexico facility in to produce "green crude" oil from algae which can be refined into transportation fuel.

Support for Energy Efficiency and On-Farm Energy Generation

- Carried out more than 6,600 projects to help thousands of rural small businesses, farmers, and ranchers improve their bottom line by installing renewable energy systems and energy efficiency solutions that will generate/save more than 7.32 billion kWh– enough energy to power 680,000 American homes annually.
- Supported efforts to create 84 anaerobic digesters to help farm operations produce electricity from captured methane and conducted feasibility studies for 26 such projects. Thanks to a partnership with the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy to cut greenhouse emissions from U.S. dairy operations, most of these projects are at dairy operations.

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