

Ethanol and Biodiesel Part of Brazil's Newly Created Agro-Energy Company

Contributed by Irene Lôbo
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The utilization in Brazil of agricultural raw material to produce energy will receive greater impetus with the creation of EMBRAPA Agro-Energy, it was announced Wednesday, April 26, at the commemoration of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Company's (EMBRAPA) 33 years of existence.

The new unit will be located in Brazilian capital Brasília and will be in charge of coordinating agro-energy research. Four major work groups will be formed: alcohol and energy derived from sugarcane; biodiesel from animal and plant sources; forest biomass; and agricultural and agribusiness waste products.

"The major challenge we are facing at present is that the energy matrix, which was totally based on fossil fuel, that is, petroleum, is becoming exhausted. We must move on to the use of energy based on agriculture, that is, agro-energy," affirms EMBRAPA's head of Management and Strategy, Evandro Mantovani.

According to Mantovani, the new EMBRAPA unit will help the country achieve the government's official goal of achieving a 2% mixture of biodiesel with diesel fuel by 2008 (around 800 million liters altogether) and a 5% mixture by 2011.

Social inclusion will be another task assumed by EMBRAPA Agro-Energy, since crops such as castor beans and manioc can be purchased from small farmers.

"This is part of the process on which we intend to work. As well as making this program function in harmony with the environmental aspect and social equality," Mantovani observes.

According to the head of Management and Strategy, EMBRAPA Agro-Energy is part of the National Agro-Energy Plan. There are also plans to create a National Agro-Energy Consortium, for the purpose of encouraging and organizing research into and production of fuel alcohol and biodiesel.

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