
Sudan Wants All the Help It Can Get from Brazil for Its Own Flex-Fuel Program

Contributed by Marina Sarruf
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Similar to Brazil, Sudan wants to have flex-fuel cars, a technology that enables vehicles to be fueled with alcohol, gasoline, or any combination of the two, by the end of 2008. The information was supplied by the Sudanese delegation in the southeastern Brazilian city of São Paulo.

The Arab country is also getting ready to start mixing ethanol into gasoline. "Initially, the idea is to mix 10% of alcohol into gasoline," said Hind Yousif Badr, of the marketing department at Kenana Sugar Company, the largest sugar factory in Sudan.

The delegation is comprised of two marketing representatives of the Kenana Sugar Company, Hind and Sara Salah Elkarib; the project director at car maker Giad, Wahab Hamed Abu Reesh; and a representative of the Sudanese Ministry of Mines and Energy, Abdel Munin Gaafar.

According to Hind, the main objective of the trip to Brazil is to obtain more information about Brazilian ethanol production, market, and laws.

"We are very much interested in learning how Brazil works with this type of fuel, because Sudan plans to start producing ethanol and working with flex cars," said Hind.

The first automobiles to receive flex engines will be those of the brands Hyundai, from Korea, and Nissan, from Japan. This is so because Sudan has partnerships with those countries, as it assembles their vehicles.

"Around 70% of the Sudanese Hyundai and Nissan cars are assembled in Sudan," said Reesh, who does not rule out the possibility of importing vehicles already equipped with flex engines.

In order to have flex vehicles, Sudan is preparing to start producing ethanol. According to Hind, Kenana already does business with Dedini Indústrias de Base, a Brazilian company that leads the global sugar and alcohol equipment sector.

Ethanol production by Kenana should begin in June 2008, and the distillery should have an initial production capacity of 35 million liters. "Later on, we should double that output," she added.

According to Gaafar, ethanol production in Sudan is part of a national program. The goal is to build 13 plants in the country. According to Reesh, oil prices are too high, so the solution is to invest on ethanol.

"Sudan is a huge country, and it has lots of land available for agriculture," he said.

The country has 200 million hectares of cultivable land. The Arab country currently produces 500,000 tons of sugar per year. Last year, Kenana alone produced 430,000 tons. Two other Sudanese companies besides Kenana are also preparing to produce ethanol.

The Sudanese also visited Brazil's National Association of Vehicle Manufacturers (Anfavea), where they were received by Eduardo Feijó, a member of the Energy and Environment Commission at the organization. He gave a lecture on ethanol and flex vehicles.

Feijó highlighted the fact that presently, 10% of the Brazilian automobile fleet is comprised of flex-fuel vehicles, and more than 13% of all automobiles in the country are strictly ethanol-fueled. The trend, according to him, is for the number of bi-fuel autos to increase even further. The delegation members invited Feijó to pay a visit to Sudan.

According to initial forecasts, the Sudanese delegation should remain in the country until the second half of August. Their schedule includes visits to the São Paulo Sugar Cane Agroindustry Union (Unica), to Dedini, to the Port of Santos, and the Brazilian Machinery Manufacturers Association (Abimaq).

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