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Tennessee 25x'25 State Alliance Takes Shape

Coalition Advocates Sustainable, Renewable Energy

NASHVILLE – Supporters of Tennessee’s agriculture, forestry, and renewable energy sectors recently celebrated the formation of the Tennessee 25x’25 State Alliance. This new coalition is working to meet the goal of having 25 percent of the nation’s energy production derived from renewable resources by 2025.

“Having a measurable and achievable goal is important in helping Tennessee and our nation move to greater reliance on sustainable, renewable energy,” said state Agriculture Commissioner Ken Givens. “We’re pleased to be working with all of our public and private partners to not only help reduce our dependence on foreign oil but help make Tennessee a leader in the development and use of biofuels.”

According to the federal energy department, renewable energy accounts for only seven percent of the nation’s total energy consumption.

Kyle Holmberg, Biofuels Program Coordinator with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and Chair of the Tennessee 25x’25 State Alliance added, “It’s an exciting time in our country for renewable energy and Tennessee’s 25x’25 Alliance is dedicated to make our state a front runner in this industry. Our vast agriculture and forestry resources will continue to play a key part in Tennessee’s energy future.”

Modeled after a national organization with similar goals, the Tennessee 25x’25 State Alliance is comprised of several state agencies, organizations, universities, advocacy groups and businesses – including the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation, Memphis Bioworks Foundation, East Tennessee Clean Fuels Coalition, University of Tennessee and Bioenergy Engineering, LLC, just to name a few.

The concept has already been endorsed by Governor Phil Bredesen in May 2007 and the 2008 Tennessee General Assembly via a resolution sponsored by Senator Bill Ketron.

Dr. Tim Rials, Director of Research and Development in the Office of Bioenergy Programs at the University of Tennessee and Co-Chair of the Tennessee 25x25 State Alliance, said that Tennessee’s mix of regional resources and transportation routes makes the state uniquely positioned to expand its contribution towards this national endeavor.

“Tennessee has virtually all of the pieces of this puzzle in place. Our task now is to put them together into an economically and environmentally sustainable system.” Rials said.

The National 25x'25 Alliance does not prescribe a specific method of how to attain the 25 percent goal, nor does it advocate any state mandates. Instead, the vision allows the agriculture and forestry communities to take the path that makes the most sense by:

- Providing a conduit through which to access and maintain ongoing dialogue with ag, forestry and energy partners, while forging coalitions with other energy stakeholders.
- Building support for embracing new energy solutions.
- Educating the general public that our nation's agriculture, forestry, and specialty biomass production and other rural resources are a key component of a new national energy strategy.

Tennessee is slated to soon become home to a pilot-scale advanced biofuels production facility in Vonore. The University of Tennessee/Genera Energy/DuPont Danisco Cellulosic Ethanol joint venture will be able to produce cellulosic ethanol through a biochemical process that is clean and uses biomass, such as switchgrass, and other organic feedstocks.

The 25x'25 goal encompasses more than just ethanol, since several emerging agriculture and forestry-related sources and clean technologies already contribute to the state's expanding renewable energy sector. These include biodiesel from waste grease and animal fats and utilizing switchgrass and woody biomass for co-firing with coal and harnessing wind and water to produce renewable electricity.

Tennessee holds strong potential to capture energy from certain solar power applications, as well as methane from the state's landfills. Energy efficiency programs will also play a role in reducing the amount of energy used by the public and private sectors. According to the U.S. Energy Information Agency, Tennesseans use more residential electricity per person than any other state in the nation.

“When it comes to renewable energy in Tennessee, the future is positive,” said Holmberg.

More information on 25x'25 is available online at www.25x25.org.

25x'25 is a diverse national alliance of agricultural, forestry, environmental, conservation and other organizations and businesses that are working collaboratively to advance the goal of securing 25 percent of the nation's energy needs from renewable sources by the year 2025. 25x'25 is led by a national steering committee composed of volunteer leaders. The 25x'25 goal has been endorsed by over 800 partners, 30 governors, 14 state legislatures and the U.S. Congress through the Energy Independence and Security Act, which was signed into law by President Bush on December 19, 2007.

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