

## **Biomass Innovation: Moving Forward in Canada**

By Nathalie Beaupré

If necessary technologies and policies were in place to produce ethanol from biomass, how much of an impact would it make on US gas consumption? That was the question that initiated the “Role of Biomass in America’s Energy Future” (RBAEF) project in 2002.

Participants from the bio-innovation © field were invited to “view the future with the high beams on” during Mark Laser’s presentation at a workshop in Ottawa in November. Mark, along with several other researchers, has developed a model that evaluates biorefinery pathways that could be used by the US to develop an economically and environmentally sustainable transportation future. For the purpose of establishing their model, a low input perennial crop, was chosen as the feedstock. Switchgrass can be converted through a combination of processes into protein rich animal feed, ethanol, heat and power, Fischer-Tropsch fuels and other valuable co-products.

One of the objectives of the Canadian Biomass Innovation Network (CBIN) is to tell Canada’s bioplayers about the American study. “We think that we can learn from the study, Canadianize the model and use it to assess different bio pathways that make the most sense for Canada” says CBIN Program Coordinator Maria Wellisch of NRCan-CETC.

The second objective of the workshop was to identify key facilitators along the bio-innovation curve and discuss how to better advance biomass innovation in Canada.

Participants representing federal programs, industry associations and university consortia stated their position on the curve and spoke about their role in the development of bioenergy, biofuels, industrial bioproducts and bioprocesses.

Other topics of discussion included challenges particular to the emerging bioenergy and bioproducts sector and available financing options for R&D, demonstration and commercialization. Gaps such as support for commercialization were acknowledged and Jay Thompson from Technology Partnerships Canada (TPC), articulated the “need to identify mutual opportunities and potential for complementarities”.

The workshop succeeded in creating awareness as to how a series of programs and resources are needed in the bio area that is competing with a more mature, petroleum industry. The organizers of the event will be posting the day’s proceedings on CBIN’s website to further stimulate discussion and awareness.

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Participants chat between presentations in Ottawa, November 8<sup>th</sup> 2005.



Mo, CBIN chair, thanks Bruce Folkedahl from the University of North Dakota Energy & Environmental Research Center for his presentation.