



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA and DOE Fund 7 Research Projects to Develop Plant Feedstocks for Bioenergy

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12, 2013 - The U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Energy (DOE) today announced \$8 million in research grants to develop non-food feedstocks that can be used for bioenergy. The grants are part of a broader effort by the Obama administration to develop domestic renewable energy and advanced biofuels, providing a more secure future for America's energy needs and enhancing rural economies.

"Today's investments are a critical piece of President Obama's strategy to create a clean source of energy and advance the sustainable use of natural resources," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Innovative research plays a vital role in boosting rural economies and creating jobs in rural America, and the benefits this type of research may offer is another pressing reason we need a new Food, Farm and Jobs bill passed."

Overall, the USDA and DOE projects are designed to improve biomass to be grown for biofuels-including selected trees and grasses-by increasing their yield, quality and ability to adapt to extreme environments. Researchers will rely on the most advanced techniques of modern genomics to develop breeding and other strategies to improve the crops. The research will be conducted on switchgrass, poplar and pine, among other plants.

The potential benefits of this research range from decreasing oil imports to increasing options for American farmers. Because these non-food crops will be optimized to tolerate conditions such as drought and poor soils, they can be grown on marginal lands unsuitable for food crops, thereby avoiding competition with food production. Farmers will have the option to grow bioenergy crops in addition to other existing crop choices.

Fiscal Year 2013 awardees include:

USDA-NIFA-funded

- University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla., \$1,000,000
- Oregon State University, Corvallis, Ore., \$1,000,000

DOE-funded

- Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, Colo., \$1,385,763
- University of Georgia, Athens, Ga., \$1,314,235
- University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill., \$998,564
- Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind., \$863,576
- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C., \$1,543,490

Project descriptions can be found online at: <http://genomicscience.energy.gov/research/DOEUSDA/#page=news>.

The joint USDA and DOE funding program was begun in 2006. DOE's Office of Science will provide \$6.1 million in funding for five projects, while USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) will award \$2 million to fund two projects. Initial funding will support

research projects for up to three years.

For more information on the joint DOE-USDA Plant Feedstocks Genomics for Bioenergy research program, visit: <http://genomicscience.energy.gov/research/DOEUSDA/index.shtml>.

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