



## News & Press Release Details

Friday, February 24, 2006

### **Florida Farm Bureau supports renewable energy initiative**

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(GAINESVILLE, FLA.) "Florida Farm Bureau Federation President Carl B. Loop Jr. today said the state's largest general agricultural organization strongly supports development of renewable energy sources that can be produced in the Sunshine State.

"I believe Florida agriculture has vast potential to support the national goal of increasing renewable energy from domestic sources to reduce our dependence on imported oil and strengthen our economy," Loop said. "We support increasing renewable energy from domestic sources. We are particularly interested in renewable biomass that can be produced by Florida's agriculture industry."

Loop has appointed a staff task force that will work in concert with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, University of Florida/IFAS and other agencies and groups to investigate the potential for using non-food based biomass to produce fuels for transportation, generating electricity and other energy needs. Biomass sources can include agricultural waste, trees, forest residues, perennial grasses and other crops.

"I have had conversations with Commissioner of Agriculture Charles Bronson and share his belief in Florida agriculture's potential to contribute substantially to efforts to reduce dependence on foreign petroleum for our energy," Loop said.

In his State of the Union address, President Bush announced the Advanced Energy Initiative, which requests \$2.1 billion to develop new technologies and alternative sources of energy to help diversify and strengthen our nation's energy mix. "By applying the talent and technology of America," President Bush said during the State of the Union, "this country can dramatically improve our environment, move beyond a petroleum-based economy and make our dependence on Middle Eastern oil a thing of the past."

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns announced this week the availability of \$176.5 million in loan guarantees and almost \$11.4 million in grants to support investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements by agricultural producers and small businesses. Applications for grants must be completed and submitted to the appropriate USDA Rural Development state office postmarked no later than May 12, 2006. For more information refer to the announcement in the Feb. 13, 2006 Federal Register or contact any state Rural Development office. Information is also available on the Web at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/farmbill/index.html>.

U.S. Energy Secretary Samuel W. Bodman also announced \$160 million in cost-shared funding over three years to construct up to three biorefineries in the United States.

The President's FY 2007 budget proposal for USDA includes more than \$250 million each year in fiscal years 2006 and 2007 for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects through Rural Development's loan and grants programs, as well as a core investment of \$85 million for USDA's energy-related projects.

"Florida supports production of more than 280 commercial agricultural commodities," Loop said. "I have no doubt that Florida agriculture can be a major player in the production of energy from renewable sources."

*Florida Farm Bureau Federation is the state's largest general-interest agricultural association with more than 140,000 member-families statewide. There are Farm Bureaus representing 64 counties in Florida, where agriculture comprises a stable, vital leg of Florida's economy, rivaling the tourism industry in economic importance. Headquartered in Gainesville, the Federation is an independent, non-profit agricultural organization and is not associated with any arm of the government. More information is available on the organization's Web site, <http://FloridaFarmBureau.org>.*

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