

A&M Formalizes Bioenergy Partnership with Willbrook Solutions, Toyota



Huntsville, Ala. — Alabama A&M University has built a team that could significantly impact the University's capacity to produce biofuel. AAMU scientists on July 26 announced a partnership with two local companies that will improve AAMU's bioenergy efforts, as well as have immediate practical applications.

AAMU's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences (NRES) has announced a partnership with Willbrook Solutions, Inc., and Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Alabama, Inc. (TMMAL). Willbrook Solutions provides the defense and aerospace industries comprehensive system engineering, and test and evaluation services. Seeking to enter the alternative energy sector, the company is partnering with NRES for research, grants and other mutually beneficial endeavors. The company has donated a prototype biodiesel processing unit valued at around \$15,000 to the NRES department for experimental and production applications (pictured below). Willbrook Solutions' bioenergy venture was propelled by a small group of employees over two years ago, says Kendell Phillips, its CEO and founder. He says the pursuit of bioenergy is rational primarily for three main reasons—national security, jobs production, and good stewardship of the environment.



For those concerned with whether or not the popularity of converting vegetable and other crop oils into biofuel will hamper the availability of such crops for food, Phillips says biofuel will be obtained from crops on land not currently being used for food crops. Moreover, crops also can be grown and channeled through the food industry first, he explains. "There is plenty of land for this purpose in north Alabama," notes the Willbrook Solutions CEO. Willbrook Solutions also will fund a work-study scholarship for AAMU student Dexter Williams, a Selma, Ala., native and junior majoring in mechanical engineering technology.

As part of its environmental sustainability drive, the Huntsville-based TMMAL will donate waste vegetable oil to AAMU for conversion to biodiesel, says TMMAL President Jim Bolte. According to Bolte, the Huntsville-based Toyota operation has been recognized for its environment friendly efforts. Those endeavors encompass the planting of thousands of trees on the Toyota plant's property and beyond, the encouragement of recycling at local schools, and the installation of solar panels at the plant. "Each month,

A&M will receive 100 gallons of used vegetable oil to make about 90 gallons of biodiesel," stated Bolte. "We are honored to be partnering with A&M."

According to Dr. Ernst Cebert, research associate professor of plant breeding/genetics at AAMU, the biofuel produced will supplement the operation of buses used for transit vehicles on the hillside AAMU campus, in combination with a prior arrangement with the Madison County Commission District 6. Cebert announced that his department has already been awarded a grant to conduct renewable energy research in partnership with Tuskegee University.

For additional information about the program and AAMU's bioenergy efforts, contact Dr. Cebert at (256) 372-4243.