



USDA Announces Partnerships in Hawaii to Help Navy Achieve its Biofuel and Other Renewable Energy Goals

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Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan today announced a series of public and private partnerships designed to help establish commercial production of advanced biofuels and other renewable energy systems in Hawaii for use by the Department of the Navy.

"Hawaii, with its semitropical climate, is among the states with the greatest potential to produce biomass," said Merrigan. "And, with its significant naval presence and its heavy reliance on imported fuels, Hawaii is a perfect location for growing biomass for the production of advanced biofuels and using the vast other renewable resources available to develop other advanced energy systems."

The announcement follows a day-long meeting here on Tuesday, April 6, with representatives of the Department of the Navy, the Department of Energy, the state government of Hawaii, the office of Senator Daniel K. Inouye, the University of Hawaii and others to discuss ways in which USDA could help the U.S. Navy move towards greater use of biofuels and the development of other renewable energy systems.

"Our unique access to renewable, sustainable sources of energy such as solar, wind, water and geothermal make Hawaii the perfect laboratory for developing alternatives to fossil fuels," said Senator Daniel K. Inouye. "The sugar industry's infrastructure in Hawaii has maintained for generations and will be put to good use producing a variety of bio fuels."

These combined efforts are in support of a Memorandum of Understanding signed by Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on Jan. 21, to encourage development of advanced biofuels and other renewable energy systems as part of President Obama's vision for a coordinated federal effort to build a clean energy economy, create new jobs and reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

USDA's Agricultural Research Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Department of the Navy's Office of Naval Research (ONR), and the University of Hawaii have agreed to work with Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company on Maui to develop decision tools to assess the most sustainable opportunities for producing advanced biofuels and renewable electricity from sugarcane and other biomass crops grown in Hawaii. The Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company is Hawaii's largest agricultural operation and its last sugar plantation.

The ONR is providing \$2 million per year through 2015 in a partnership with USDA's Agricultural Research Service to support research for producing advanced biofuels from sugarcane in Hawaii, with an emphasis on determining the best strategies to ensure adequate resources and infrastructure are available to supply feedstock for biorefineries to produce diesel and jet fuels from sugars.

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