



The Sustainable Biodiesel Alliance

“creating a better world through sustainable, community-based biodiesel”

The Facts About Biodiesel

The Sustainable Biodiesel Alliance understands that facts and fiction of biodiesel can be confusing. The media today is full of contradictions and misinformation, sometimes showing biodiesel as a part of the solution, and at times painting biodiesel as part of the problem. The following information is designed as a tool to answer some of the most important questions about biodiesel and the biodiesel industry today. The SBA is dedicated to promoting sustainable practices in the U.S. biodiesel industry and to helping the biodiesel user of today ask the right questions and educate themselves.

Question: Can biodiesel be used in regular diesel cars and trucks?

Answer: Yes. Biodiesel can be used in most diesel engines with little or no modification.

*Biodiesel can be operated in any diesel engine with little or no modification to the engine or the fuel system. Biodiesel has a solvent effect that may release deposits accumulated on tank walls and pipes from previous diesel fuel storage. The release of deposits may clog filters initially and precautions should be taken. Ensure that only fuel meeting the biodiesel specification is used.

Question: Does biodiesel produce lower levels of harmful GHG emissions?

Answer: Yes. The emissions produced using biodiesel are significantly lower than those produced by petroleum diesel use.

*The use of biodiesel in a conventional diesel engine results in substantial reduction of unburned hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, and particulate matter compared to emissions from diesel fuel. In addition, the exhaust emissions of sulfur oxides and sulfates (major components of acid rain) from biodiesel are essentially eliminated compared to diesel.

Question: Does biodiesel require less energy to produce than petroleum diesel?

Answer: Yes. According to the USDA and the DOE biodiesel production is more than 3 times more efficient than the production of petroleum diesel.

*Energy Balance of Biodiesel production = 3.2

*Energy Balance of Petroleum Diesel production = 0.8



Question: Is biodiesel responsible for rising food costs and world hunger?

Answer: Food costs are more affected by rising energy costs than the cost of commodities such as biodiesel feedstocks.

*According to the US Secretary of Agriculture, Ed Schaffer “biofuels production are responsible for 2 to 3 percent of the increase in global food prices, while biofuels have reduced consumption of crude oil by a million barrels a day.” According to Chick Conner, former Secretary of Agriculture “About 80 cents of every retail dollar spent on food goes to cover processing, packaging, distribution and marketing costs. Of course you recognize all of those are very, very intensive consumers of energy and directly impacted by rising energy costs.”

-USDA 2008, USDA 2007

Did You Know?

- **Biodiesel can be made from a variety of sources including waste products like yellow and brown grease, animal fats like tallow and poultry fats, and many non-food crops like cotton seed, jatropha, sunflower and hemp.**
- **When biodiesel is created and used with a community-based model 90 cents of every dollar stays in the community.**
- **Using a local sustainable model, biodiesel production can create local jobs and local energy security. While minimizing environmental impact, and maximizing community benefit.**
- **Some biodiesel sold in the US is made from palm and soy oils imported from Malaysia, Indonesia, South and Central America. Many reports have connected these plantations to the clear cutting of some of the world's densest rainforest. While some biodiesel sold in the U.S. is made from recycled oils, non-food crop based oils, and non-competitive sustainably produced crop based feedstocks.**
- **The Grocery Manufacturers of America, the Washington, D.C. trade association representing many of the largest food companies in the world, is spending millions of dollars on a public relations campaign to blame biofuels for rising food prices.**
- **According to a recent study published by Texas A&M School of Agriculture “The underlying force driving change in the agricultural industry is the price of oil, and that corn prices have little to do with food costs.**

-Houston Chronicle. Joe Outlaw, Texas A&M