

# Researchers Write Roadmap To Renewable Future

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — Working under the auspices of the Renewable Vision 2020, nearly 100 of the country's top scientific minds joined together recently to tackle a single problem — how do we replace petroleum-based chemicals with plants as the main "building blocks" upon which the material needs of our society are met?

The end result of their efforts will be a technology roadmap endorsed by the agricultural, forestry, and chemical industries alike, that will be equally accepted by both public and private researchers in setting research and development priorities. Initiated in 1995 and led by the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) and the U.S. Department of Energy, the purpose of the Renewable Vision 2020 effort is to replace 10 percent of all petroleum-based chemicals with plant-based, renewable resources by the year 2020, and 50 percent by 2050.

"This is very important work we're doing. So many people don't understand that petroleum doesn't just fuel our cars; observes workshop attendee Al Cotter, a corn grower from Minnesota and a member of an NCGA Corn Action Team. "Petroleum is the base chemical used in the production of nearly all plastics, the synthetic fibers in clothing, paints and stains, inks and fast food containers and so many more of the materials things we enjoy.

"For all economic purposes, fossil fuel supplies will run out over the next 20 to 30 years. If that happens before we've found economically viable replacements, it will seriously threaten the economic growth, healthy standards of living, and strong economic security Americans now enjoy."

Plants are one of the most promising replacements for petroleum because plants are more readily abundant and renewable, cut costs, require less energy and produce less waste in the production of consumer goods.

"Believe it or not, there is actually more carbon—or

energy—in a 'barrel' of corn than in a barrel of oil, but we can't tap into and use that energy today," said Cotter, a former manager who worked in research, engineering and manufacturing for the 3-M Company. "So you can see how this effort makes not only good environmental sense, but good economic sense to companies looking for healthy returns for their stockholders."

The technology roadmap represents an important intermediate step in the efforts of the Renewables Vision 2020 coalition.

Step one was the development of the "Plant/Crop-Based Renewable Resources 2020" document which outlined the coalition's vision and goals. In February, companies, Associations and government agencies signed a historic agreement in support of the vision.

The second and current

step is the preparation of a technology roadmap for use by government and industry in setting R & D priorities. The NCGA and DOE will create the roadmap based upon the discussions of these workshops. Upon completion, it will become a "living" document, that can change and grow as new discoveries and research breakthroughs are



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made.

The final step will be the actual research and business development efforts that will make renewable technologies and products a reality.

For more information on the Renewable Vision or a

copy 2020 or a copy of the "Plant/Crop-Based Renewable Resources 2020" document, contact the NCGA at (314) 275-9915 or visit its web site at <http://www.ncga.com>.

## Corn, Soybean Conference in Fogelsville Jan. 15

FOGELSVILLE (Lehigh Co.) — The 1999 Corn and Soybean Conference is scheduled here at the Days Inn on Jan. 15.

This year's program will feature a variety of timely topics on key issues that corn and soybean growers faced in 1998: grain marketing, soil health, the potential of

precision farming, and some key ideas for improving corn and soybean management.

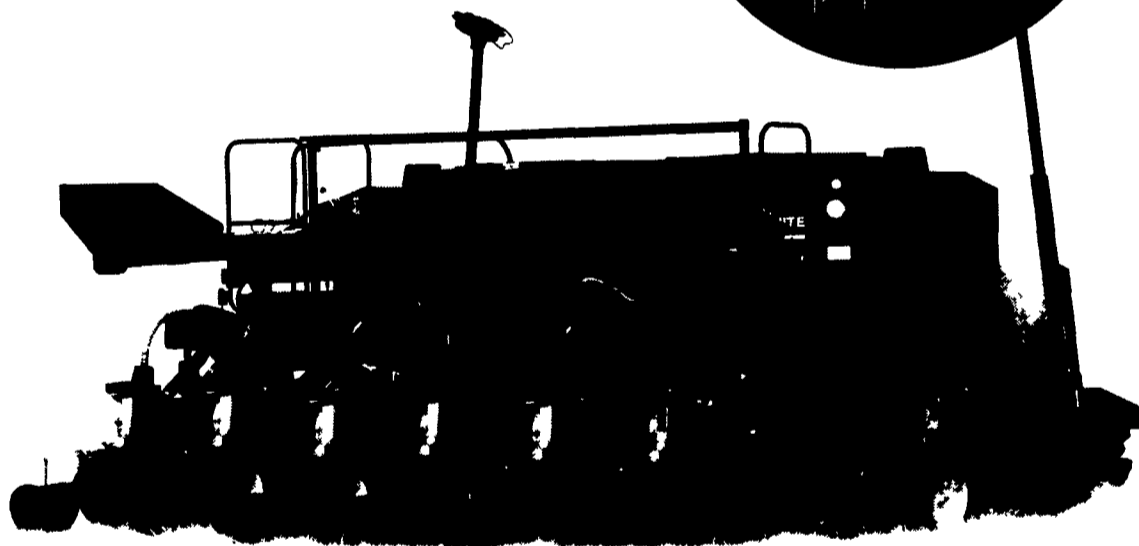
A variety of age exhibitors will also be on hand for the event. Fire Acre Corn Club Awards and Soybean Yield Contest Awards will also be presented during the program.

A variation in this year's program will be that it will be

followed by an all-day program on grain marketing the following day, Saturday, Jan. 16.

The Days Inn is located in Fogelsville, west of Allentown on Rt. 78. For information on registration for either conference or exhibiting, contact Greg Solt at the Northampton county extension office, (610) 746-1970.

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