

Cecil County Ag Showcase Day Draws 200

ANDY ANDREWS
Editor

FAIR HILL, Md. — About 200 producers and agri-industry representatives were on hand Tuesday during the 22nd annual Ag Showcase Day here close to the Cecil County Fairgrounds.

Special presentations were provided on alternative or "green energy" biofuels.

But for biofuels, including the use of products such as soybeans in biodiesel or ethanol as fuel additive, the reach has to extend beyond the ag community and into the homes.

"We have to get interest in these products outside the farm arena and into home heating," said Ray Filasky, manager, petroleum retail operations and sales with Southern States Cooperative, Inc., Richmond, Va. "Home heat, or 'green fuel,' is welcomed by the homeowner. The homeowner loves the concept."

Filasky noted that finding ways to refine soybean oil for fuel

has to "economically" look good to farmers and homeowners.

The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., is a "think tank" that is looking into ways of promoting biofuel, according to Filasky. Delmarva Biofuels Committee is also looking for ways to promote biofuels at the farm and in the home.

Lynne Hoot, Maryland Grain Producers Association, spoke about the feasibility of developing an ethanol plant. The 15 million-gallon facility would cost about \$31 million, and \$12 million in equity would be needed to start the plant, operated in business as a limited liability company.

Hoot spoke about the Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board's Mid-Atlantic BioFuels Project, an effort to study the feasibility of using barley to produce ethanol.

In the BioFuels Project description form handed out during the Ag Showcase Day, some things are noted: Maryland once had an ethanol plant on the East-

ern Shore, but it closed in the late 1970s as a way of handling the energy crisis. But oil became less expensive and federal support subsidies were reduced, so it closed.

With the passing of the Clean Air Act in 1990, and the phasing in of reformulated gasoline (RFG), an enormous market opened for ethanol. Now, efforts are under way to establish a renewable fuel standard, since special interests want the oxygenate requirement of RFG eliminated.

Hoot drove over a Dodge Caravan Sport van, a "flexible fuel vehicle" with the words "ETHANOL" on the license plate.

John VandeVaerst, USDA/ARS, Beltsville, Md., noted that study after study has shown that the 300 million miles driven by biodiesel engines has proven biodiesel's efficiency. An SUV parked at the Ag Showcase Day noting the car's biodiesel fuel was evident on the window.

"When the diesel engine was first invented," VandeVaerst asked those who attended the showcase, "what did it run on? Peanut oil. We're going back to where we were."

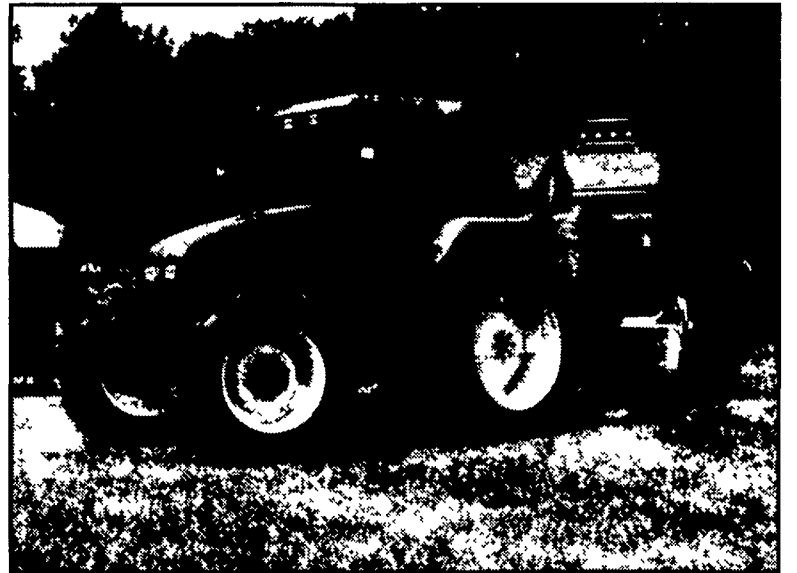
VandeVaerst noted that scientists "can't find any disadvantages to using biodiesel."

There are two types of "biodiesel" products available: one is soybean oil and the other, used vegetable oil.

Seth Powell, representative of Tri-Gas and Oil, noted the SUV with the window display noting biodiesel's use.

"The biodiesel we sell is 100 percent soybean oil, no recycled restaurant grease," said Powell. "We have a product strictly made from soybean meal."

A market exists for soybean producers, since more interest is



Equipment from various dealers makes its way past the "inspection tent" at Ag Showcase Day in Maryland Tuesday.

gaining in the biofuel.

One major ag equipment manufacturer engines now accept a 5 percent engine blend of the biofuel. This "opens doors" for more manufacturers to accept biodiesel.

The material biodegrades as fast as sugar in the environment, noted Powell.

As for the use of biofuel in homes or in farm equipment, noted Filasky of Southern States, "We look for it to be big over time, and as a farmer cooperative, we will encourage it all we can."

Scott Rowe, Cecil County Ag and Natural Resources Educator, spoke about controlling a new pest for ornamental rose producers, Rose Rosette Disease. The disease affects backyard roses, caused by a virus spread by windborne mites from the Midwest.

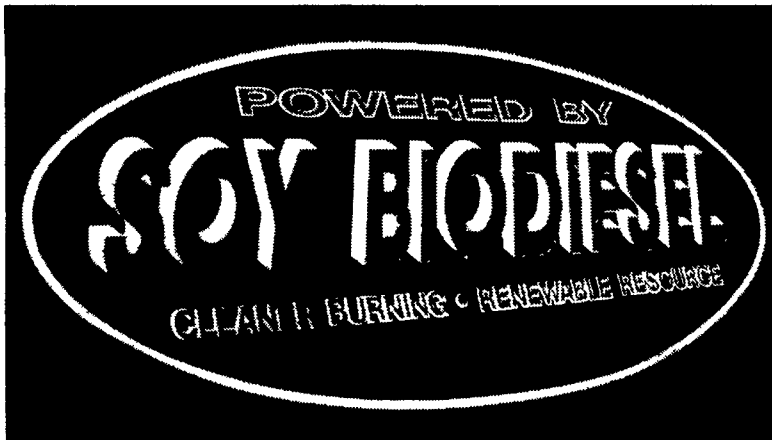
The disease causes browning and death of stems and leaves.

Also, Rowe spoke about methods to control multiflora rose, a weed infestation. Two types of control are possible: organic, using goats that love to eat the material, and chemical control with a 2,4-D product. Spray costs about \$52 for 100 gallons of mix.

Hundreds of attendees also had a chance to see forage demonstrations by various manufacturers.

Also on hand for the Ag Showcase Day was Cecil County Fair Queen Katee Callahan, 17, daughter of Daniel and Julia Callahan, Perryville.

The Perryville High School graduate will study nursing at Cecil Community College. The Cecil County Rabbit Wranglers 4-H member was crowned Monday evening.



A sport utility vehicle from Tri-Gas and Oil bore this graphic at the annual Ag Showcase Day.



Lynne Hoot, Maryland Grain Producers Association, spoke about the feasibility of developing an ethanol plant.



Seth Powell, representative of Tri-Gas and Oil, noted the SUV with the window display denoting the use of biodiesel.



Ray Filasky, manager, petroleum retail operations and sales with Southern States Cooperative, Inc., Richmond, Va., left, speaks with Neal McCleary, Elkton, Md. at the Ag Showcase Day.



Scott Rowe, Cecil County Ag and Natural Resources educator, spoke about controlling Rose Rosette Disease and multiflora rose management at the Ag Showcase Day.



Visitors to Ag Showcase Day watch forage cutting demonstrations.