

Biofuel developed in Cuba

Makes sense – what about sugar cane?

Prensa Latina
June 7, 2006

Rocketing oil prices have made Cuba search for less polluting energy sources as biofuels.

It has become ever more urgent the need to stop irrational hydrocarbon consumption, led by the United States, the greatest polluter worldwide. This situation and the diminishing oil reserves, will have a negative impact in national economies, above all in developing countries.

According to a report by the Cuban News Agency (ACN) for a number of years, scientists look for alternative solutions to substitute oil and nuclear energy with less polluting sources like, hydraulic, wind and bioenergy.

The European Union plans to have 5.75 per cent of its motor vehicles working with biofuels, including bioethanol and biodiesel by 2010.

Those alternative fuels are not new, they originate in biomass, generated by oil-producing plants like sunflowers, corn, sugar beet and crop remains.

Brazil started producing bioethanol from sugar cane as raw material and by 2003 it was producing 9.9 million tons a year. All the gasoline sold in the South American country carries 25 per cent of biofuel by law.

France has already 30 cities where public transport runs on that fuel. Still, oil represents over 35 per cent of all primary energy in the world. Coal is in second place with 23 per cent and natural gas supplies 21 per cent.

Biofuel reaches barely 10 per cent of world energy balance. Cuba, for many years now, has been developing interesting experiences with biodiesel, using the *Jatropha curcas*, bush known in Spanish as 'pinon de botija.'

The initiative is encouraging if it is taken into account that one hectare of this crop can yield over 1.5 thousand liters of biodiesel.