



**alt.Consulting**

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## **Biofuel Project Can Boost Delta Economy**

*'Farm to Fuel' will use natural resources to bring new jobs to the Arkansas Delta*

DeWitt, AR – The Arkansas County community of DeWitt is the site for launch of the first “Farm to Fuel” project on October 29 that promises jobs and energy independence for the Arkansas Delta, the Arkansas Advanced Energy Foundation (AAEF) announced today.

The Foundation promotes greater public understanding of advanced energy in Arkansas through research, public education programs and economic and workforce development.

AAEF and alt.Consulting, a non-profit community economic development organization working in the Mississippi River Delta since 1998, have partnered to sponsor the event that will convene farmers, entrepreneurs, educators, public officials, community leaders and advanced energy business leaders from across the Delta to mark production of the first gallon of biodiesel from local feedstocks at a mini-biorefinery in DeWitt.

The launch event will introduce a new winter, energy crop as well as the technology required to turn it into biofuel for the Delta and the region.

Following a press conference and panel presentation in the morning, Delta Regional Authority Chairman Chris Masingill will be the keynote speaker during a luncheon celebrating the launch.

The mini-biorefinery, operated by local entrepreneur Johnny Davis, will utilize a technology developed by Springboard Diesel to produce small batches of biofuel with annual capacity of 80,000 gallons per year. As demand increases, DeWitt will obtain a larger micro-biorefinery designed by Dr. Srikant Gir and developed at the Marion Berry Renewable Energy Research Center at Mid-South Community College. It will have a production capacity of 200,000 to 1 million gallons per year. Once DeWitt has outgrown the mini-biorefinery, alt.Consulting will move it to develop the next *Community of Innovation*.

Community leaders in DeWitt saw the opportunity in developing a biofuel resource and became the first *Community of Innovation* to begin producing biodiesel. The fuel will utilize feedstocks from an energy crop grown in the Delta called Camelina and waste vegetable oil. Once processed into ASTM standard biodiesel, it will be sold locally to power municipal trucks and equipment, school buses, farm vehicles and other private vehicles. Any excess fuel will be sold to fuel blenders in Arkansas and Memphis. And, because of no transportation costs and ready availability, the locally-produced biodiesel will be price competitive in Delta communities with petroleum products while creating jobs and business opportunities locally.

According to data developed by analysts at alt.Consulting, the projected economic impact of the project in DeWitt will generate over \$2 million per year in new economic activity once the micro-refinery is operating at capacity and producing 1 million gallons of fuel per year. This impact is expected to be realized within just 2 years of

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implementation. alt.Consulting seeks to replicate this model in as many Delta communities as are interested in participating.

After researchers at Arkansas State University (ASU) and Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas (PCCUA) tested Camelina, they joined with alt.Consulting to recruit growers across the region and ensured these growers that there will be a buyer for the new, alternative crop. According to researchers at ASU and PCCUA, Camelina fits into the planting and harvesting seasons of traditional Delta crops so it doesn't compete with existing food production. It's planted in October or November, and after a short growing season of only 85-100 days, Camelina is harvested in early May, allowing farmers to plant soybeans at the optimum time.

"The City of Dewitt is excited to be the first community in the Delta to utilize this technology, and we look forward to the day when we have enough feedstock to enable the introduction of the micro-biorefinery and we get to pass the mini-biorefinery on to the next town," said Dewitt Mayor Ralph Relyea. "Farm to Fuel is a smart investment for our city and an innovative way to make the most of the natural resources that the Delta provides its people."

As the Farm to Fuel project matures, rural communities across the region will have the capacity to generate, utilize, and market millions of gallons of biodiesel produced from local energy crop feedstocks grown and harvested just miles away.

Current sponsors of the "Farm to Fuel" event include Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas, Farmers & Merchants Bank of DeWitt, Arkansas Farm Bureau, and Southern Ag of DeWitt.

The October 29 event begins with a press conference and mini-biorefinery tour at 10:00 a.m. and continues through the day. The Agenda for Farm to Fuel is as follows:

**10:00 am Press Conference & Mini-Biorefinery Tour**

523 S. Jefferson Street  
DeWitt, AR 72042

Participants will be introduced to the Farm to Fuel project and meet the key partners for project implementation. Participants will also be the first to see the biofuel technology by rotating through demonstration stations featuring Camelina crushing with a mobile crush unit, a refining station with waste vegetable oil, and Camelina oil being run through the refinery.

**11:00 am Farm to Fuel Value Chain Panel Discussion**

Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas  
1210 Rice Belt Avenue  
DeWitt, AR 72042

During this portion of the event, participants will learn more specifically about the Farm to Fuel project and the value chain model supporting its implementation. Participants will be the first to see a Farm to Fuel documentary video produced about the process in the first Community of Innovation, DeWitt. And participants will learn how this model can be replicated in other communities across the Delta region.

**12:00 pm Lunch featuring Keynote Speaker Chris Masingill, Delta Regional Authority Chairman Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas**

1210 Rice Belt Avenue  
DeWitt, AR 72042

Participants will enjoy a lunch buffet catered primarily by local food entrepreneurs, with coordination by 5-Oaks Catering. Chairman Masingill will deliver remarks on bioenergy and the potential economic impact on communities like DeWitt

**1:30 pm**      **Camelina Growers' Workshop**  
Presented by Arkansas State University Faculty

**Improving Rural Livelihoods through the WealthWorks Approach**  
Presented by Deb Markley, Center for Rural Entrepreneurship and Barbara Wyckoff, Dynamica Consulting

#### **HOW TO PARTICIPATE:**

For event information or to RSVP, please contact: [info@arkansasadvancedenergyfoundation.org](mailto:info@arkansasadvancedenergyfoundation.org) or 501-537-0190

**Members of the media:** Please contact Shelly Baron at (501) 537-0190 or [shelly@arkansasadvancedenergyfoundation.org](mailto:shelly@arkansasadvancedenergyfoundation.org) for information on media credentials.

**Arkansas Advanced Energy Association** is a business group dedicated to growing Arkansas's economy by expanding our energy workforce and manufacturing base through the increased development, manufacture, and utilization of advanced energy technologies. [www.arkansasadvancedenergy.com](http://www.arkansasadvancedenergy.com)

**The Arkansas Advanced Energy Foundation** is the educational affiliate of the AAEA. The Foundation promotes greater public understanding of advanced energy in Arkansas through research, public education programs and economic and workforce development. The Foundation is dedicated to informing the energy policy debate with well-researched, fact-based data on the advanced energy economy in Arkansas and by providing a public forum where state leaders can address Arkansas's energy challenges for the future. [www.arkansasadvancedenergyfoundation.org](http://www.arkansasadvancedenergyfoundation.org)

**alt.Consulting** is a non-profit organization with a unique approach to delivering small business services. Since opening the first office in 1998 in the Delta, alt.Consulting has helped thousands of small businesses grow, offer jobs, and create new wealth in their communities. Today, alt.Consulting is also a Community Development Financial Institution making working capital loans up to \$50,000 to small businesses throughout the Delta.

#### **Report Shows Global Economic Impacts of Advanced Energy**

A report released in January 2013 by Advanced Energy Economy (AEE) shows that advanced energy was a \$1.1 trillion global market in 2011, larger than pharmaceutical manufacturing worldwide. Read the full report here: <http://arkansasadvancedenergyfoundation.org/files/dmfile/AEEIEconomicImpactofAdvancedEnergy-Final.pdf>

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