

CAAP PROJECT INVESTIGATES CLEAN WOOD ENERGY

The Agro-forestry and Woodlot Extension Society (AWES) recently received \$195,000 of Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program (CAAP) funding to investigate the feasibility of using private woodlots to provide energy for communities.

The Wood Bioenergy for Rural Ag-Business and Communities project will provide adequate data to develop a model that will be useful for other businesses in determining their own operations' ability to adopt the use of wood biomass.

AWES is a joint venture between government, industry, and conservation agencies. Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development is the main partner on this initiative and providing expertise and support to carrying out the project activities.

"This province possesses an abundance of private forest woody biomass and when that biomass is produced and harvested sustainably, bioenergy is a green energy," said Toso Bozic, Woodlot Specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.

"This funding provided the opportunity for communities and business to know if a wood bioenergy project is possible or not," he added. "Results from these pre-assessment feasibility studies give communities and business a clear picture if a wood bioenergy project is economically, socially and environmentally feasible."

In Alberta agricultural zones, it is estimated that there are more than 1.5 million hectares of forested land that is privately owned by farmers and ranchers. Many private forested areas are not commercially harvested due to the size of timber, hauling distances or the lack of available market for their product. Also, due to lack of harvesting forest fires have become more prevalent and devastating to the agricultural landscape.

Wood can be used as a heating source, and there are commercially available wood biomass heating systems that burn clean and provide efficient heat. The use of these heating systems in



Camrose County Bioenergy Facility

rural areas would provide an opportunity for landowners to develop a market for their wood and diversify their revenue sources, while reducing heating costs for local agricultural processing businesses, schools, community facilities and other small businesses.

This initiative intends to evaluate the technological and economic feasibility of wood bioenergy using already developed criteria and adopting it to suit local needs. The proponent will focus on the selection of 15 agri-businesses in rural communities who are well-positioned to benefit from adopting these technologies. Potential partners will be identified for the project participants. They will be linked with producers who will serve as wood suppliers, as well as researchers to ensure they are aware of the most relevant information and technologies and potential sources of funding from various government programs for bioenergy, biomass or carbon credits.

Some of the details to be included in the feasibility studies are project site details and proposed boiler size, comparison of

wood or biomass to conventional heating fuel sources, available technologies, storage options, environmental impact and legal requirements.

Each business will be presented with a report and recommendations regarding the economic cost and potential return on investment of installing new heating technology. The goal of the project is to provide a market for producers with currently unused woodlots, while increasing the competitive ability of rural businesses with more economically and energy efficient heating sources.

The Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta manages Alberta's \$21.9 million share of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's five-year, \$163 million Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program (CAAP).

Contact: April Milne

Agri-Industry Development Officer

Agriculture and Food Council

april.milne@agfoodcouncil.com

(780) 469-3714 ext. 243