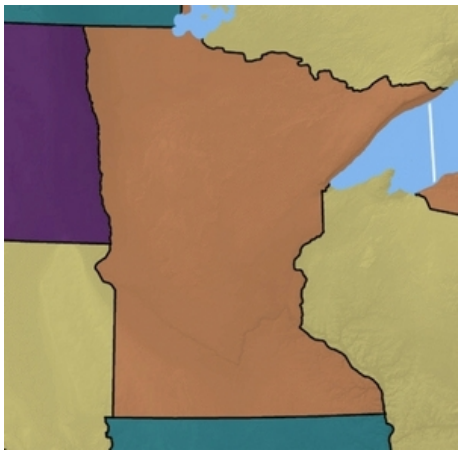
SarTec wins grant to build farm-scale plant using Mcgyan process

By Erin Voegele | March 14, 2012



The Minnesota Department of Agriculture recently announced it would award a total of $2.4 million in grants to support nine renewable energy innovation projects within the state. Anoka-based SarTec Corp. has been awarded $400,000 under the funding initiative to support a project that will include the design and construction of a small-scale, on-farm biodiesel processor that employ's the company's Mcgyan technology.

SarTec's Mcgyan process is a one-step biodiesel production technology that simultaneously performs a catalytic conversion of triglycerides and free fatty acids into biodiesel. According to Pete Greuel, the company's general manager, the small-scale production facility developed as part of the new project will be able to produce approximately 100 gallons of biodiesel per day. Ever Cat Fuels already operates a larger-scale, 3 MMgy plant featuring the technology.

Greuel said that the design phase of the project is scheduled to run through July 2012, after which time construction will begin. The system is scheduled be operational by November 2012. Following the successful start-up of the processor, it will likely be put into service on a farm. "We envision taking [the processor] to a couple of different farms and letting them try it out to make sure it works there," he said. "Ideally the farmer will be able to grow his own crop, press his own oil and then produce his own fuel right on the farm. The overall goal is to make it accessible to farmers, or potentially co-ops of farmers."

According to Greuel, the system can take in virtually any feedstock, including camelina, pennycress or soy. "For the initial testing we'll be purchasing feedstocks and running them through," he said.

SarTec wasn't the only biofuel project to benefit through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture grant program. Fairmount-based Rural Advantage was also awarded $73,000. According to information released by the department, Rural Advantage is a nonprofit organization that promotes interconnections between agriculture, environment and community. The grant will help fund a feasibility study and business plan to assist Prairie Skies Biomass Co-op in developing operational procedures, membership policies and feedstock contracts for a 300 ton per day biomass conversion facility in Madelia. The facility would concert raw agricultural biomass into an advanced biofuel.

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