

Jeff Broin's Introductory Comments at the Global Potential of Biofuels side-event at COP15

Thank you Dr. Reise.

It's a great honor for me to be here today and participate on this very prestigious panel at this incredibly historic event here in Copenhagen. I really appreciate the title of this panel – The Global Potential of Biofuels – because it is the global potential of these renewable products that drives me and inspires me every single day.

What my introduction didn't tell you is that I've been involved in biofuels for most of my life. I grew up on a farm and it was there that I learned the common sense approach of using renewable products for energy.

I think of farmers as the original environmentalists. On the farm I was taught to not waste anything. We used agricultural leftovers as fuel for heat. We used animal waste as fertilizer. And back in the 1980's, we even built a small-scale bio-ethanol plant on our family farm to turn excess grain into energy.

Since that time, as we have grown from that one little farm-scale plant that produced 250,000 gallons a year [946,000 liters] into the largest bio-ethanol producer in the U.S. with over 1.5 billion gallons [5.7 billion liters] of capacity, and produce over 8 billion pounds [3.6 million metric tons] of food in the form of distillers grains.

And I have seen first-hand, the tremendous improvements in not only the way biofuels are made, but in the sustainability of agriculture as well.

Through science and technology we have made biofuel production incredibly efficient; increasing yields while reducing energy and water use.

Combine this with the efficiencies gained in agriculture through more sustainable practices and increased crop yields, grain ethanol production can now claim a reduction in greenhouse gases of as much as 59% compared to gasoline.

But, what's really exciting is the global potential of biofuels. We will continue to see improvements in production processes. Biorefineries are now starting to use alternative energies to power the production processes.

For example, we have a facility that is now using wood waste and methane gas piped from a nearby landfill for power – nearly eliminating fossil fuel usage at the biorefinery.

And agriculture will also continue to improve in practices such as increased adaptation of no-till farming; while yields are expected to increase dramatically, possibly doubling in the next 20 years.

And of course, we are making excellent strides in commercializing cellulosic ethanol which will allow us to use agriculture waste, wood waste and many other feedstocks to produce renewable energy.

Our company has been running a pilot-scale cellulosic ethanol plant for over a year and I'm happy to report that it's going very well and we expect to commercialize our technology in the next two years. The U.S. EPA estimates that this process using agriculture leftovers as a feedstock will reduce greenhouse gases by 114%!

And furthermore, we are continuing to develop new products like biochemicals and biopolymers, now made from petrochemicals that will soon be produced from renewable feedstocks.

As I mentioned earlier, the thing that inspires me the most: is the global potential of biofuels. Over the years, I have seen biofuels significantly reduce dependence on fossil fuels and help the environment.

Additionally, biofuels have the unique ability to revitalize communities. As we have built new biorefineries in struggling villages throughout the U.S. farm belt, these small towns and local family farmers have benefited in many, many ways.

And as biofuels can be made out of more and more feedstocks, I see no reason why this shouldn't be duplicated around the world.

So what is the true global potential of biofuels?

I believe the potential is virtually limitless.

There is tremendous potential to continue to improve agriculture and biofuel production processes to further reduce emissions.

And with the vast amount of biomass around the world, there is enormous potential to displace fossil fuels with clean and green renewable energy.

And through biofuel production, we have the wonderful potential to create good green jobs, and revitalize rural areas throughout the world.

And best of all, we don't have to wait. Biofuels are here and they're now.

All that is needed to make this potential turn into reality are solid policies aimed to encourage investment, innovation and use – because the industry stands ready to make it happen.

Thank you.