

Community & People

Farmers invited to join ARCC in local biofuels initiative

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In 2010, Anoka-Ramsey Community College joined forces with biodiesel firms McGyan Biodiesel, SarTec Corp and Ever Cat Fuels to produce a 10-acre energy crop demonstration site at the college's Cambridge Campus to grow crops for biodiesel fuel. Now, SarTec is seeking area farmers to expand that initiative.

As part of \$500,000 Department of Energy grant SarTec received in late 2011, farmers who participate would be educated about how to plant, grow and harvest these low-impact crops and would be compensated for the energy crop they produce. Seed for planting is also provided, and farmers would grow the same crops as the college, Camelina and Pennycress.

The MN Leadership and Investment in renewable energy legislation of 2007 set a goal of 25 percent of the total energy use in the state being derived from renewable energy resources by 2025. The production of biodiesel from non-food energy crops helps rural economies and demonstrates that farmers are able to produce these low-impact crops in addition to their normal production of food crops.

Anoka-Ramsey's current Pennycress crop in the demonstration plot is overwintering will be harvested in the spring. The college is also growing 20 small experimental plots at the Cambridge Campus. The plots include pennycress from 10 different origins from as close as Iowa to as far away as Germany, Poland and former Serbia and Montenegro. Photos of these plots can be viewed at: <http://webs.anokaramsey.edu/biofuel/IA-USDA%20pennycress%20CC.htm>.

College Biology Faculty members, Melanie Waite-Altringer and Debby Filler and Chemistry faculty are working on a grant titled, "Building Collaborative Partnerships to Increase STEM Teaching and Learning." The purpose of the grant is to help prepare a biofuels industry workforce by building upon the education model developed by the college's Professional Training Division and educate students about the multi-faceted bio-fuels industry.

Currently, Anoka-Ramsey offers biofuel training designed with the technical guidance of SarTec and Ever Cat Fuel representatives. The first courses began January 2011 and included mechanical foundations, biodiesel fundamentals, OSHA introduction, spreadsheet fundamentals, and technical report writing. This spring, Anoka-Ramsey is offering a Mechanical Fundamentals for the Biofuels Industry and an industry-specific Excel course online.

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