

The BioPreferredSM Program: Supporting the Energy and Environmental Agenda

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the lead agency for the Federal Government's BioPreferredSM program, a biobased products initiative demonstrating environmental leadership and creating "green" jobs and new markets for farmers, manufacturers, and vendors.

A low-cost, high-return venture, the BioPreferredSM program offers three major benefits:

- *Climate change impact reduction.* The use of qualifying biobased products reduces the introduction of new fossil carbon into the atmosphere.
- *Energy/environmental security.* Biobased products replace petroleum products, helping to increase U.S. energy and environmental security and independence. Many biobased products are sustainable, renewable, and compostable.
- *Economic development.* Biobased products create jobs by increasing demand for agricultural and forestry materials and by increasing new product development, manufacturing, and ultimately sales.

Section 9002 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, otherwise known as the 2008 Farm Bill (Public Law 110-234), requires every Federal Agency to give procurement preference to designated items composed of biobased products unless those items (1) are not reasonably available, (2) do not perform adequately, or (3) are not reasonably priced.

Biobased products are defined as those the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be composed in whole or large part of renewable agricultural or forestry materials. Such products, often made from plant, animal, and marine substances, include items such as cleaners, lubricants, building materials, insulation, roof coatings, and fuel additives as well as a host of other sustainable industrial items that the Federal Government can use.

Designated BioPreferredSM Items

USDA's goal is to increase Federal procurement of biobased products governmentwide and to develop Government and public markets through a voluntary labeling program. Accordingly, USDA tests and evaluates biobased products and designates items for preferred Federal procurement.

Through published regulations, USDA has designated a total of 33 biobased items or product categories representing nearly 3,000 individual products. Federal procurement requirements are already in place for six of the product categories, and requirements for the remaining 27 categories will become effective in June 2009. Approximately 2,100 companies, many of which are small businesses, currently offer more than 14,500 biobased products.

USDA conducts outreach on behalf of the BioPreferredSM program and has developed a series of BioPreferredSM tools, such as model contract language, to assist Federal Agencies and the business community in the implementation of the program. Most of these tools are available at the BioPreferredSM Web site (<http://www.biopreferred.gov>). For further information or technical assistance, please contact Jeffrey Goodman at (202) 401-4747 or Jeffrey.goodman@da.usda.gov.