Alabama 25 X ‘25 State Alliance is Formed

Coalition advocates a long-term vision for the state’s energy future with sustainable, renewable energy as a major component

AUBURN – Supporters of Alabama’s agriculture, forestry, and renewable energy sectors made official recently the formation of the Alabama 25 X ‘25 State Alliance, a new coalition aiming to ensure that 25 percent of the nation’s energy production is derived from renewable resources by 2025.

“The issue of energy is one of the most important facing our state and our nation,” said Ron Sparks, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries. “For the sake of our national security and energy independence, we must expand our renewable energy production. In Alabama, that means agriculture and forestry must play an even larger role in growing our energy independence.”

According to the federal energy department, renewable energy accounts for only seven percent of the nation’s total energy consumption.

Dennis Bragg, owner and operator of Bragg Farming Company - a Madison County, Alabama corn, cotton, soybean and wheat farm operation - and Chairman of the Alabama 25x’25 State Alliance added, “Our state’s farmland, forest, and irrigation water are our greatest resources that will allow us to participate in producing renewable energy. The national and state economies will benefit from renewable energy produced and consumed in Alabama. This will be the beginning of Alabama building a sustainable renewable energy future.”

Modeled after a national organization with similar goals, the Alabama 25 X ’25 State Alliance is comprised of several state organizations, agencies, universities, advocacy groups, and businesses – including the Energy Division of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, Alabama Farmers Federation, Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition, Auburn University, University of Alabama, and Headland Industrial Development Board, just to name a few.

“Tremendous economic opportunities are available to farmers and entrepreneurs in Alabama who take advantage of the increasing demand for biofuels and renewable energy,” ADECA Director Bill Johnson said. “This new alliance will support growth of our alternative energy industry and wise use of Alabama’s abundant renewable resources.”

The 25 X ’25 concept has already been endorsed by Governor Bob Riley in November 2006 and the 2007 Alabama legislature via a resolution sponsored by Representative Greg Wren.

Dr. Steve Taylor, Director of Auburn University’s Bioenergy and Bioproducts Center, said that Alabama’s mix of crops, livestock, natural resources and transportation routes makes the state uniquely positioned to expand its contribution towards this national endeavor.
“Reaching the standard of 25 percent renewable energy by 2025 is a realistic, achievable target. By striving for this mark, America will reduce its dependence on foreign oil, while improving the quality of our air and water. In addition, this would be a major boost for Alabama’s economy,” Taylor said.

The National 25 X ’25 Alliance does not prescribe a specific method of how to attain the 25 percent goal, nor does it advocate any state mandates. Instead, the vision allows the agriculture and forestry communities to take the path that makes the most sense by:

- providing a conduit through which to access and maintain ongoing dialogue with the ag and energy partners, while forging coalitions with other energy stakeholders outside of the ag sector;
- building support for embracing new energy solutions; and
- educating the general public that our nation’s agriculture, forestry, and specialty biomass production and other rural resources are a key component of a new national energy strategy.

Alabama is slated to soon become home to a commercial-scale advanced biofuels production facility in Livingston. Gulf Coast Energy will be able to produce cellulosic ethanol as well as synthetic gasoline and synthetic diesel fuels through a gasification process that is clean and uses biomass and other organic wastes and residues as its feedstock.

The 25 X ’25 goal encompasses more than just ethanol, since several emerging agriculture and forestry-related sources already contribute to the state’s expanding renewable energy sector. These include biodiesel from waste grease and animal fats and switchgrass and woody biomass for co-firing with coal at Alabama Power’s Plant Gadsen to produce electricity.

Alabama also holds strong potential to capture energy from certain solar power applications, as well as methane from the state’s landfills.

“When it comes to renewable energy in Alabama, the future is positive,” said Steve Guy, forestry and soybeans commodity coordinator for the Alabama Farmers Federation. “By increasing their share of America’s energy production, Alabama’s farmers, ranchers, and foresters will not only add to the profitability of their operations, they will help reduce our reliance on petroleum-based energy. The growth of renewable energy will bring more jobs, more economic development, and more diverse energy supplies to all Alabama families.”

More information on 25 X ’25 is available online at www.25x25.org.

25x25 is a diverse national alliance of agricultural, forestry, environmental, conservation and other organizations and businesses that are working collaboratively to advance the goal of securing 25 percent of the nation’s energy needs from renewable sources by the year 2025. 25x25 is led by a national steering committee composed of volunteer leaders. The 25x25 goal has been endorsed by nearly 800 partners, 30 governors, 14 state legislatures and the U.S. Congress through the Energy Independence and Security Act, which was signed into law by President Bush on December 19, 2007.

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