Florida 25 X ‘25 State Alliance is Formed
Coalition advocates a long-term vision for the state’s energy future with rural-based renewable energy and carbon management as major components

Tallahassee – Supporters of Florida’s agriculture, forestry, and renewable energy sectors recently made official the formation of the Florida 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.

“We are very pleased to be part of the 25 X ’25 effort in Florida,” Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Deputy Commissioner and Florida 25 X ’25 State Alliance Chairman Jay Levenstein said. “25 X ’25 was the impetus for Commissioner Bronson’s Farm to Fuel Initiative which was created to enhance the market for and promote the production and distribution of renewable energy from Florida-grown crops, agricultural wastes and residues, and other biomass and to enhance to value of agriculture products or expand agribusiness in the State.”

Modeled after a national organization with similar goals, the Florida 25 X ’25 State Alliance is comprised of several state organizations, agencies, universities, advocacy groups, and businesses – including the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Farm Bureau Federation, Florida Forestry Association, University of Florida-IFAS, Florida Renewable Energy Producers Association, The Climate Group, BioFlorida, and BioResources Management, just to name a few.

“With Florida’s abundant sunshine, ample rainfall and roughly 10 million acres of farm land, our agricultural and forestry industries can produce massive amounts of ethanol and biodiesel,” said Charles Bronson, Commissioner of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and member of the 25 X ’25 National Steering Committee. “Such an effort would help reduce this country’s dependence on foreign oil while at the same time provide our growers with another crop to make a living on and assure the future viability of their farms.”

The 25 X ’25 concept has already been endorsed by the Florida Cabinet in May 2006 and the 2007 Florida Legislature via resolutions sponsored by Senator Mike Bennett (SR 1860) and Representatives Stan Mayfield and Denise Grimsley (HR 7117).

Dr. Geoffrey Dahl, Professor and Chair of the Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Florida, said that Florida’s mix of crops, livestock, natural resources and climatic conditions makes the state uniquely positioned to expand its contribution towards the 25 X ’25 goal while also helping to improve Florida’s environment.
“Not only does Florida have tremendous capacity for biomass production, but the state’s animal industries provide another potential source of green energy. With over one million cattle and a half million horses, Florida’s livestock industry generates a tremendous quantity of animal manure that can be used as an energy substrate for methane production. For example, harnessing the methane potential from Florida’s dairy cows could yield a significant amount of green energy, but also provide an additional benefit of a substantial reduction in green house gases, as methane is 20 times as potent a GHG as CO2,” Dahl 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.

Florida is home to numerous biomass-based and non-biomass-based renewable energy projects and could soon be home to a commercial-scale advanced biofuels production facility. Companies such as Verenium, Florida Crystals, and Citrus Energy, will be able to produce cellulosic ethanol as well as other biomass-based fuels through either a gasification or enzymatic 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, sugar bagasse and urban wood wastes to generate clean electricity at the New Hope Power Partnership, and waste-to-energy plants across the state that captures household trash to produce electricity. Florida also holds strong potential to capture energy from certain solar power applications, as well as coastal winds and ocean wave and tidal power.

“I believe the formation of the Florida 25 X ’25 State Alliance builds upon Commissioner Bronson’s Farm to Fuel Initiative,” said John Hoblick, President of the Florida Farm Bureau Federation. “It allows for a diversified group of stakeholders to find comprehensive solutions to our energy and environmental needs while helping to maintain the viability of Florida’s farmers and ranchers.”

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

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