

WBR ARTICLE

Biofuel research in Wyo. gets boost

By Staff

June 22, 2009 --

CHEYENNE – The Wyoming Business Council Agribusiness Division has received a \$49,873 grant from the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program to explore the feasibility of sustainable biofuel crop production in Wyoming.

The three-year SARE grant provides funding for test plots of oil fuel seed stock crops in Wyoming for plants such as canola, camelina and sunflowers that can be processed into biodiesel or value-added by-products like high value livestock feed, pet food additives, alternative lubricants, and others. The grant also provides for the test crop data to be collected and analyzed to determine if crushing and oil processing plants are feasible in the state.

A team of producers, representatives from the University of Wyoming Campbell County Extension Office, Sheridan Farmers' Cooperative, Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Wyoming Animal Science Department, and Future Farmers of America members from Basin, Gillette, Pine Bluffs and Sheridan will conduct the biofuel crop research.

"Varying input costs for fuel and fossil fuel related products takes a toll on producers and the economic stability of rural communities," said Donn Randall, manager of the Wyoming Business Council's Value-Added Program. "We want to look into the potential for raising sustainable alternative crops that can add value to current cropping practices, provide for vertical integration of a product from farm to community consumption, and create economic development in rural communities."

The grant also enabled individuals from Wyoming interested in biofuel production to go on a trade mission to Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. The group visited with producers and businesses in each state about the latest in approved cropping practices for biofuel crops, and the types of oil seed crushing equipment and oil processing equipment necessary to produce high quality biodiesel and other value-added by-products.

"We had the opportunity to learn in four days what has taken about four years for producers and businesses in Washington to understand," said Randall. "They've really pioneered the way in this industry and have assumed a lot of risk that we now won't have. It really provided valuable direction on where Wyoming needs to go."

For questions about the biofuel project, contact Randall at 307.777.6578 or donn.randall@wybusiness.org