



For more information, contact:

Hannah Lipps
Communications Director
National Sorghum Producers
(806) 559-7486

-or-

Blair Fannin
Associate News Editor & Communications Specialist
Texas A&M AgriLife Communications
(979) 845-2259

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 19, 2008

USDA and Chinese Ministry Sign Biofuels Agreement

This morning at the International Conference on Sorghum for Biofuel the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) of the People's Republic of China signed an important agreement to collaborate on biofuels research. The signing came during a meeting of over 200 scientists, industry leaders and government officials in Houston, Texas.

"We have an existing cooperation between USDA and the Chinese Ministry for Science and Technology," said Eileen Herrera, Acting Deputy Director for the Office of International Research Programs at USDA's Agriculture Research Service (ARS). "We cooperate on several initiatives. Signing this protocol represents formal cooperation in the area of biofuels research."

Existing cooperation between the U.S. and China on science and technology was originally signed in 1979. In 2002, USDA and MOST signed a specific agreement paving the way for today's agreement between Tsinghua University in Beijing and ARS's National Center for Ag Utilization Research (NCAUR.)

The agreement establishes the intent to cooperate in establishing processes and infrastructure for conversion of sweet sorghum and other feedstocks to ethanol. This agreement represents an important step forward in the collaboration of some of the world's top scientists to contribute to alternative energy research through the development of alternative feedstocks.

"Today's signing establishes a virtual joint center for a series of projects that are very specific to the two centers," said Michael Abbey, International Affairs Specialist and Asia Program Coordinator for ARS. "We also intend to include universities and business in both China and the United States. We can now focus on specific areas of cooperation."

Dr. Shi-Zhong Li of the Institute of New Energy Technology at Tsinghua University affirmed the focus of this collaboration. "We will work on sweet sorghum conversion to ethanol and the use of cellulosic sorghum for ethanol."

"Whether it's for grain, sugar or a high-tonnage source of lignocellulose, most in attendance at this conference are committed to making sorghum the preferred dedicated feedstock for

production of ethanol and other liquid fuels,” said Dr. Mark Hussey, Interim Vice Chancellor for Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M University and Director of Texas AgriLife Research.

Tim Lust, CEO of the National Sorghum Producers noted the importance of such an agreement. “This is a milestone for the sorghum industry and for our members as the world turns its attention to sorghum. Sorghum’s water sipping qualities, short growing season and ability to grow on 80 percent of the world’s land, including some marginal agricultural areas, really lends it to biofuels production as the U.S. and the world face pressing issues with energy independence and economic difficulties.”

Texas A&M has been a recognized leader in agriculture, natural resources and life sciences since Texas A&M University became a land-grant institution in 1876. Texas A&M AgriLife encompasses five components of The Texas A&M University System: College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M University, Texas AgriLife Research, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Forest Service, and Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory. With teaching, research, extension and laboratory facilities throughout Texas, Texas A&M AgriLife serves people of all ages and backgrounds and is a cornerstone of one of the state's premier institutions of higher education.

NSP represents U.S. sorghum producers. The organization works to ensure the profitability of sorghum production coast to coast through legislative representation, regulatory representation, and education. To learn more about NSP, visit www.sorghumgrowers.com.