



08-10-09

Sec. Vilsack promotes biochar's ag & economic benefits

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack addressed attendees at the 2009 North American Biochar Conference August 10th and discussed the Obama administration's commitment to taking international leadership on climate change and the potential to create rural jobs and opportunities for landowners through the use of biochar.

The North American Biochar Conference being held Aug. 9-12 in Boulder, CO is the first major biochar conference held in the United States. The keynote speakers for the conference are Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Dr. Susan Solomon, Senior Scientist, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Center for Energy and Environmental Security at the University of Colorado at Boulder is the lead sponsor and organizer of the conference which is co-sponsored by the International Biochar Initiative. The conference focuses on issues surrounding large-scale usage of biochar as both a sequestration agent and soil amendment.

Secretary Vilsack's remarks at the conference included these:

- "Climate Change is one of the great challenges facing the world. President Obama and I believe that America must show international leadership in our efforts to combat the effects of a changing climate and that we must embrace new technologies to create a green energy economy."
- "Farmers, ranchers and forest landowners can play a very important role in addressing climate change and creating a new energy economy. Biochar has the potential to create opportunities for the agriculture and forestry sectors to mitigate the effects of a changing climate while creating jobs in rural communities and offering new income sources to landowners."
- "Landowners may eventually use biochar as a soil amendment to improve agricultural production and enhance carbon storage, with income potential from sale of carbon offsets. In states like Colorado where forests have been ravaged by bark beetles, dead timber might be used as a feedstock for biochar. The creation

of new markets for forest products like biochar and bioenergy could significantly bolster sustainable forest management, forest restoration and rural jobs.”

- “USDA is pleased that our Agricultural Research Service is part of the research effort to determine the long-term costs, benefits and potential of biochar. ARS has substantial existing expertise in biochar research including a multi-location team that is conducting a coordinated series of chemical and physical analyses, studies, and field trials.”

For information on the North American Biochar Conference, go to:
<http://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?eventid=684390>

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