



Ghana based biofuels firm signs contract with Energy Partners of Chile

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The Jatropha

US owned Ghana based biofuels company Gold Star Biofuels has signed a contract with Chile firm Energy Partners Chile Ltd (EPC), to produce biofuel for the Chilean company, a press release from EPC has said.

Gold Star Biofuels by the terms of the contract is expected to construct small biodiesel plants, planting Jatropha throughout Chile. And this would be the first commercial-scale biodiesel production in that country. And these are zero emission plants that reduce the impact of shipping by minimizing the distance between biodiesel production and its use.

This contract by EPC is seen as a historic step toward easing the electrical power crisis in Chile, while minimizing the environmental impact.

The project would use a mixture of 20% biodiesel with 80% petroleum-based diesel (a blend known as "B20"), and this is expected to reduce its emissions in its 43MW generation plant "Degan" on the island of Chiloe.

As EPC and their partners build more generating plants in Chile (over 265MW under construction), they would use biodiesel from Gold Star Biofuels.

As soon as possible, Gold Star will begin the first commercial cultivation of jatropha trees in Chile. Within two years, EPC will be generating power from Chilean grown and refined jatropha oil. The advantage of jatropha for Chile is that it can thrive on marginal soil where food crops can not grow. Jatropha is drought resistant so it requires little or no irrigation and Gold Star's farming practices are gentle to the earth. Gold Star manually plants, tends and harvests jatropha year-round, creating many rural jobs for a sustainable economy as well as a sustainable environment.

EPC is constantly working to improve its ability to provide Chile with clean electrical power. Their plants have been enhanced with the latest technology to minimize emissions and noise and now run with extreme efficiency to reduce the cost of electricity in Chile.

This is a significant event for Chile as well as for EPC and Gold Star Biofuels which will benefit the people of Chile, its economy and the environment.

By Emmanuel K. Dogbevi

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Gold Star to cultivate five million acres of land for biofuels in Ghana

Gold Star Biofuels a subsidiary of Gold Star Farms Ltd., is cultivating five million acres of land in Ghana to plant jatropha for the production of biofuels for export.

According to the firm it has secured commitment from farmers to grow the plant in the country.

The company began cultivating jatropha in Ghana in 2005 and it has plans to start biofuels production soon at its farm in Nkawkaw in the Eastern region.

Biofuels production in Ghana gained public attention when Brazilian president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva signed an agreement with the Ghanaian government to produce sugarcane for biofuels in Ghana.

The agreement was signed while he was in Ghana for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XII) meeting in April, 2008.

During the signing ceremony, da Silva said, "in Ghana we are developing a project that will result in growing 27,000 hectares (of sugarcane) for the production of 150 million litres of ethanol per year that are destined for the Swedish market."

And then in November 2008 a Norwegian company ScanFuel Ltd., was reported to start operations outside Kumasi in the Ashanti region to produce biofuel. The reports said ScanFuel will initially cultivate Jatropha seeds, considered high oil-yielding on 10,000 hectares of land.

The company which has a Ghanaian subsidiary, ScanFuel Ghana Ltd said its Ghanaian unit has contracted about 400,000 hectares of land, with up to 60 percent reserved for biofuel production, "not less" than 30 percent for food production and the remainder for biodiversity buffer zones.

The current energy crisis is fueling the interest of many countries into alternative sources of energy, and biofuels appear to be the favourite.

Most of the companies that are cultivating plants, especially, jatropha for the production of biofuels, say it could grow on any type of land, which implies that productive agriculture land would not necessarily be used for that purpose.

The executive director of Gold Star Biofuels, Jack Holden was quoted as saying, "we like to find land where other things don't grow very well or land that has been fallow." It is however, yet to be seen if these companies will keep to their word when it comes to the type of land they would utilise for the purpose.

Some of the companies also have long term projections for the industry, mostly in developing countries.

According to Holden, landowners who contract with Gold Star Biofuels to provide jatropha

sign 50-year commitments. "When we go out into villages and see the four- and five-year-old children there, we know that a lot of them will be working on our farms and taking the place of their parents working there."

These companies also believe that the biofuels industry would bolster the economies of countries that engage in it, and alleviate poverty by providing jobs.

Jack Holden reportedly said Gold Star Biofuels shares profits with landowners, pays good wages and supplies medical insurance to workers. Instead of hiring migrant workers, adding that Gold Star employs workers year-round. "It's all a part of Gold Star's commitment to be socially responsible," he said.

He said Gold Star Biofuels is wholly owned by his Ghanaian wife Diana Holden.

Meanwhile, Gold Star has been awarded a contract to build small facilities throughout Chile to produce a combined total capacity of 77 MMgy of biodiesel from Chilean jatropha oil for Energy Partners Chile Ltd.

The biodiesel will be used in a B20 blend to produce electricity at Energy Partners Chile's 43-megawatt power generation facility in Degan on the island of Chiloe.

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