



Expanding horizons for Illinois' ag-based economies

In Focus

In Focus: Welcome!

Welcome to the second edition of *In Focus*, Vision for Illinois Agriculture's (VIA) periodic electronic newsletter. The aim of this newsletter is to keep you up-to-speed on VIA developments, and help your organization provide input to gain benefit throughout Illinois agriculture. Add our address to your email software to ensure consistent delivery! And please forward this newsletter to colleagues, or add addresses to the mailing list by emailing ddiplacido@ifib.org.

ABLS Joins Vision for Illinois Agriculture Efforts

In the course of orchestrating the Illinois community's preparations for BIO 2006, the Illinois Biotechnology Industry Organization, better known as iBIO, learned that although Illinois is one of the top U.S. agricultural states—measured by revenues, exports, research, varieties of products, advances in biotechnological applications, and financial services—the state possessed no coordinated strategy for making the most of biotechnology in these sectors. Subsequently, iBIO and the iBIO Institute boards of directors approved a strategy project—which became known as the Ag-Bio Leadership Summit (ABLS).

Representatives of agricultural businesses, research organizations, government, and trade organizations participated in a series of ABLS meetings from March '07 through early '08. iBIO Institute representatives, in turn, have been participating in *Vision for Illinois Agriculture* sessions and contributed financially to help sponsor the Vision project.

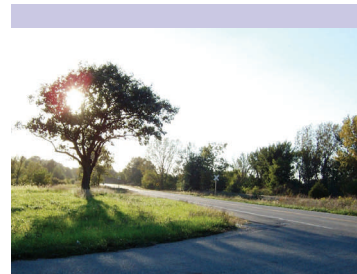
The *Vision for Illinois Agriculture* plan incorporated the major elements of the ABLS plan and included many as near-term priorities for implementation. Given the strong similarities between the two plans, the overlap in organizations which authored them, and a desire to join forces for optimal implementation of their provisions, the leadership of the two efforts agreed to move forward as one group under the *Vision for Illinois Agriculture* banner.

"*Vision for Illinois Agriculture* has incorporated the ABLS plan and is a great framework for moving forward with the involvement of all the key constituencies." said David Miller, President and CEO, iBIO.

Biofuels Update

A growing world population requires cutting-edge technology and innovation in order to meet the demands of food and fuel. Today, Illinois corn and soybean producers are being called upon to provide not only feed for livestock and food for humans, but also the raw material for producing renewable fuels like ethanol and

June 2008



Attend Planning Meeting June 11

The *Vision for Illinois Agriculture* planning committee will meet on June 11, 2008, at Illinois State University's College of Business. The planning committee will meet from 9-11 a.m. to review overall progress and discuss future direction of the VIA process. The three implementation teams for Workforce Development, Business Climate, Permitting and Economic Development will then meet from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m., with a working lunch. A report-back session will wrap up the meeting at the end of the day. For more information, please contact ddiplacido@ifib.org.

Learn More!

For more information about the Illinois Agriculture Vision, please visit our website at www.illinoisagriculturevision.org.

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soy biodiesel.

Since 2000, the number of Illinois ethanol plants looking for approval from the Illinois EPA has continued to grow. Currently, there are nine ethanol plants in operation: Adkins Renewable Energy, Lena; Lincolnland Agri-Energy, Robinson; ADM in Decatur and Peoria; Midwest Grain Products, Pekin; Marquis Energy, Hennepin; Center Ethanol, Sauget; and Aventine Renewable Energy, two plants in Pekin. These plants account for using 355 million bushels of corn, producing 1 billion gallons of fuel.

Four plants are currently under construction: Big River Energy, Galva, 110 million gallon capacity; One Earth, Gibson City; Illinois River Energy, Rochelle, a 50-million gallon expansion; and Patriot Renewable Fuels, Annawan, with 110 million gallon capacity.

For soy biodiesel, two plants—Incombrasa in Gilman and Stepan near Joliet—are currently in production. Two additional plants—Nova Biosource Fuels, Seneca, and BioVantage near Belvidere—have been built.

Most recently, Blackhawk Biofuels, LLC, of northwestern Illinois, has acquired the assets of a biodiesel plant in Danville, Illinois, and hopes to complete construction and begin production by this fall. The plant is adjacent to Bunge North America and was originally designed to use soybean oil exclusively. However, process technology upgrades to the facility will allow for use of other feedstocks, such as animal fats. The plant is projected to produce 45 million gallons of biodiesel per year.

Workforce Development Team Priorities

Education, leadership development, and workforce development were three issues identified during the Vision for Illinois Agriculture (VIA) planning process. During February '08 strategy meetings, planning team members suggested a workforce development task force be initiated to address these priority areas, based on the VIA plan and member input and prioritization.

- Study and recommend key areas of substantial workforce skills development and mastery of essential growth strategies of existing and new programs.
- Conduct analysis and better understand key factors in attracting human talent into food and agriculture careers in Illinois and to position Illinois as a destination for top talent.
- Develop a public and private partnership to broaden and promote the image of the food and agriculture sector and career opportunities in Illinois' large metropolitan regions.
- Encourage expanded leadership programs, such as the Illinois Agriculture Leadership Program and Agriculture Leaders of Tomorrow (ALOT), and develop new leadership development.

The planning teams will meet again to further develop implementation strategies on June 11.

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