



# Board Action Area 1: Sustainability

As President Bush recently noted in a major address to the renewable energy community, the production volumes specified by EISA are not just goals; they are mandatory requirements. He further added that these volumes are needed for the “sake of economic security, national security, and for the sake of being good stewards of the environment.” The Federal government is playing a vital role in achieving all of these objectives by mobilizing teams of the best and brightest scientists from all agencies.

A key goal of the National Biofuels Action Plan is to maximize the environmental and economic benefits of biofuels use by advancing sustainable practices and improvements in efficiency throughout the biofuels supply chain from feedstock production to final use. The Board aims to provide the interagency leadership to steer biofuels development on a sustainable path through the compilation and evaluation of biofuels sustainability criteria, benchmarks and indicators. The Board activities will promote close coordination among federal and state agencies and industry to identify best agricultural and land use practices and the most efficient production, conversion, transportation and storage systems that assure economic growth and viability of the biofuel system while protecting ecosystem and human health.

## Historical Context

“Sustainable” as defined by Executive Order 13423 means to “create and maintain conditions under which human and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permits fulfilling the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans.” The EISA amendments to the RFS program promote sustainability by (1) directing that significant reductions in greenhouse gasses be achieved for different feedstocks; (2) requiring that biofuels production not adversely impact the environment or natural resources; (3) focusing on the development of cellulosic and other feedstocks which will promote the sustainable production of biofuels;

(4) stipulating that every 3 years EPA assess and report to Congress on environmental impacts of biofuel systems.

## *Biomass R&D Board Actions*

As demonstrated by EISA and domestic environmental, agricultural, and conservation policies, the U.S. is an international leader in promoting sustainable biofuels production. The Board will continue its focus on active issues by receiving briefings on key aspects of United States policy including EPA methodologies for greenhouse gas lifecycle analysis conducted under its RFS requirements and the State Department’s involvement in the Global Bioenergy Partnership. To further advance its leadership, the Board is:

- Defining, by November 2008, a set of science-based national criteria and identifying science-based indicators to assess sustainable production of biofuels across the biofuels supply chains. These criteria and indicators will be coordinated with ongoing international activities, and will be used to evaluate the environmental, economic, or social performance of biofuels production and use.
- Establishing a Sustainability Interagency Working Group led by DOE, USDA, and EPA, with participation from other agencies, to facilitate strategic planning and coordinate Federal activities; interface with industry and environmental groups; coordinate EISA studies across different agencies; and define and evaluate sustainability criteria, benchmarks and indicators.
- Planning a series of workshops with internal and external stakeholders. Internal workshops will inventory key research efforts in the area of sustainability; identify relevant models, and identify strengths and weaknesses of existing models and gaps. External workshops will involve discussions of analytical and modeling efforts to address pressing issues/challenges, and also inform R&D priorities through dialogues between decision-makers and scientists.