

The path to sustainable production of biofuels

Countries all over the globe are turning to biofuels to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Governments are pursuing policies to reduce fossil fuel use not only for energy security but also to slow global warming and meet environmental goals. Both are important topics in the APO's Green Productivity (GP) Program. The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Production of Biofuels held in Manila, 26–28 November 2008, addressed a host of important issues related to biofuel production.



Senator Zubiri speaking on the Philippines Biofuels Law

“The topic of this forum is indeed relevant and timely not only to the countries of the Asia-Pacific but also to all countries where food and energy are ever-increasing concerns,” stated President of the Development of Academy of the Philippines Antonio D. Kalaw, Jr. in his welcome remarks during the inaugural session attended by 42 participants from 15 countries, eight international experts, APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka, and Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri. Secretary-General Takenaka

expressed his admiration of the Philippines for contributing to GP practices. “I am pleased to note that the Philippines has always been at the forefront of the development of GP,” said Takenaka in his welcome remarks. After giv-

ing a briefing on APO projects to promote biomass utilization and biofuels, he asked all participants for their commitment to the goals of the forum. “We have high expectations that this forum will lead to new partnerships, cooperation in knowledge sharing, joint projects, and research among leading experts and institutions in the field.”

Senator Zubiri presented the highlights of the Philippines Biofuels Law, which came into effect in February 2007. He then explained the future prospects of the biofuel/ethanol industry in the country, emphasizing the importance of consistent efforts for the mandated use of biofuels: “It is a continuous, evolving process that requires foresight, adaptability, and a careful balance between consensus and political will.” He stressed that the establishment of policy and legislation is an important first step.

The forum agreed with Senator Zubiri, and it was pointed out that a holistic framework is needed to consider economic, social, and environmental outcomes. It was recommended that governments focus on nonfood crops for biofuel production so as not to compete for land where food crops are traditionally grown. Plants meeting these criteria include jatropha and algae species.

The forum also recommended that the APO and UN FAO facilitate the establishment of a regional technical working group to review quality and safety standards of products and processes. Networking among key regional players in the biofuel industry would enhance their competitiveness against those in the Americas. Participants and experts suggested that the forum be followed up by meetings on specific biofuel issues. 