Boeing, Honeywell's UOP and Government of Mexico Launch Research and Advocacy Collaboration to Drive Commercial Use of Sustainable Aviation Fuels

Unprecedented collaboration by government, private sector and academic leaders furthers development of sustainable aviation fuels

CARTAGENA, Colombia, Oct. 14, 2009 – Boeing [NYSE: BA], the Airports and Auxiliary Services agency (ASA), an arm of Mexico's Ministry of Communications and Transport, and Honeywell's UOP today announced a collaboration to identify, research and further the development of a commercially viable market for Mexico-sourced sustainable aviation biofuels.

"This is a first-of-its-kind collaboration, involving key government, private sector and academic leaders," said Darrin Morgan, director of Biofuel Strategy for Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "Working together, we are assessing the potential for large-scale production of aviation fuels made from sustainable biomass systems such as halophytes, algae, jatropha, castor and other so-called next-generation biomass-for-energy systems."

ASA, which is responsible for all fuel management and airplane refueling operations in Mexico, together with Boeing made the announcement on the eve of the annual ALTA Aviation Leaders Forum, a gathering of more than 400 senior airline and aviation industry executives.

"We have a holistic view of the entire supply chain and are in an ideal position to push a collaborative framework forward and otherwise serve as a catalyst for progress," said Alejandro Rios, director of Fuel Services for ASA.

Today's announcement builds on meetings in September with more than 50 government and business representatives in Mexico. Based on strong stakeholder enthusiasm, ASA, Boeing and UOP agreed to commission initial studies on promising biomass systems for Mexico and to formalize this collaboration with a commitment to work via the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels, a global multistakeholder initiative developing a global biofuel sustainability framework.

Halophytic plants, which can be highly productive sources of biomass energy, will be the first research target. Halophytes thrive in arid land and can be irrigated with seawater waste streams from aquaculture, making halophytes potentially suitable for biofuels development in arid ecosystems with little competing land use potential. With improved plant science and agronomy, early testing results indicate halophytes also have the potential to deliver very high yields per unit of land.

Boeing, UOP and the Masdar Institute of Science and Technology in Abu Dhabi recently announced the first comprehensive, peer-reviewed assessment of halophytes, and Mexico will be a key contributor through this broader effort. The global team will collaborate with Mexican researchers in examining viability on arid, degraded land, where Mexico has opportunity to pioneer such biomass systems in conjunction with regions around the planet with similar climate and land use challenges.

Study elements will include evaluating aquaculture management and practices, assessing land use and energy requirements and identifying any potential adverse ecological or social impacts associated with using halophytes for energy development, specifically for aviation biofuels.

"Partnerships like this one are the key to a better understanding and, ultimately, commercial use of renewable aviation fuels," said Jennifer Holmgren, UOP general manager for Renewable Energy & Chemicals. "There is great potential here to identify and implement a sustainable supply chain for the production of aviation biofuels."

A successful study outcome will give ASA the opportunity to better understand the potential bioderived sources that can be produced in Mexico and converted into a sustainable aviation fuel supply. The results are expected to be available in late 2010.

"ASA aims to be a catalyst to jump-start the production of bio jet fuels in Mexico, enabling our country to become a leader in the development and commercialization of aviation biofuels worldwide," said General Director of ASA Gilberto López Meyer.

Sustainable biofuels are a key component of aviation's strategy for lowering carbon emissions. These advanced-generation biofuels are derived only from plant sources that do not distort the global food chain, compete with fresh water resources or lead to unintended land-use changes.

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Contact:

Terrance Scott
Environmental Communications
Boeing Commercial Airplanes
+1 206-766-2949
terrance.scott@boeing.com

Nicolaas Groeneveld-Meijer
International & Sales Communications
Boeing Commercial Airplanes
+ 1 206-228-4527
nicolaas.w.groeneveld-meijer@boeing.com

More information: http://www.newairplane.com/environment/sustainableBiofuels/