Boeing, South African Airways Explore Ways for Farmers to Grow More Sustainable Biofuel Crops

Collaboration with Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials supports greater market access for "smallhold" farms

JOHANNESBURG, Mar. 5, 2014 – Boeing [NYSE:BA] is launching an initiative with South African Airways (SAA) and the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB) to expand opportunities for "smallhold" farmers in Southern Africa to grow crops that produce sustainable fuels.

The program builds on a global effort by Boeing, RSB and other partners to help farmers with small plots of land gain access to markets for sustainable biofuels and biomaterials. In the coming months, Boeing and RSB will work with Southern African stakeholders to create pilot programs to build knowledge and skills among groups of farmers who want to certify their crops as sustainable.

Over the long term, as Southern Africa gains capacity in this area, more farmers will be positioned to tap into demand for biofuel feedstocks certified to provide socio-economic value to communities without adverse impact to food supplies, fresh water or land use.

"SAA seeks to drive development of sustainable biofuel supply chains in a way that enhances our region's economic opportunity from local agriculture and energy production," said Ian Cruickshank, SAA Group Environmental Affairs Specialist. "Our joint project with Boeing and RSB is a first step toward the goal of ensuring that our efforts benefit smallhold farmers, given their importance to our country's rural economy."

"A sustainable aviation biofuel industry presents a chance for this smallhold farming community to pursue economic development opportunities that would positively impact their livelihood," said Lianne Stein, Boeing vice president of Global Corporate Citizenship. "As part of Boeing's efforts to build better communities worldwide, we are working to ensure positive outcomes for the environment and, most importantly, for the people of Southern Africa."

"We will work with partners from across the region to identify how we can join together to help small farmers improve their production and income," says Rolf Hogan, Executive Secretary, Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials. "Certifying small farmers is the surest way to ensure sustainable biofuels that not only reduce carbon emissions but also improve the livelihoods of rural communities."

This initiative follows the announcement in October 2013 that Boeing and South African Airways would collaborate to develop a sustainable aviation biofuel supply chain in Southern Africa. It is also aligned with a similar effort by Boeing and RSB to expand biofuel crop opportunities for small farmers in Southeast Asia.

When produced sustainably, aviation biofuel emits 50 to 80 percent lower carbon emissions through its lifecycle (compared to petroleum fuel) because biofuel feedstocks absorb carbon dioxide during their growth cycle. Aviation biofuel refined to required standards has been approved for a blend of up to 50 percent with traditional jet fuel. Globally, more than 1,500 passenger flights using biofuel have been conducted since the fuel was approved.

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