

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2007

SamoaFiber to produce bio-oil from *Gynerium sagittatum*



The search for abundant tropical biomass sources continues. In an interesting development, a new biofuel company, [SamoaFiber Holdings](#), is going to build a fast-pyrolysis plant in Loreto, Peru's most northern region, using as a feedstock a tall, very fast-growing C4 type of tropical grass ([earlier post](#)) that thrives on river banks and is locally known as "caña brava" (*Gynerium sagittatum*).

Gynerium sagittatum, also known as Samoa fiber or arrow grass, grows in a very large region of Latin America and in an exceptionally wide range of climates, from the humid tropics to semi-deserts. It can be found along river banks from the Antilles to Northern Chile and Argentina, to the South-Brazilian Atlantic coast up to Guyana and to the Peruvian Pacific coast. The crop thrives on most tropical river banks, but most notably in the high Amazon basin. On sandy dunes, it fixes the sand with its rhizomatic root system and then colonises river banks, where it withstands seasonal flooding ([more information](#)-*french). Local communities harvest the tall and dense grass for use in construction (thatching). The stems range between three and ten meters in height.

On January 5 and 7, SamoaFiber's CEO William L. New and other company executives met with Loreto's regional president, Mr. Ivan Vasquez, who [announced](#) during a press conference in Iquitos, that he's been "coordinating with the national Executive (power) the start of an ambitious project aimed at producing bio-oil from the industrialization of cana brava (*gynerium sagittatum*), which grows wildly throughout the Amazonian flood lands."

The regional president then added that the president of Peru, Dr. Alan Garcia Perez, "is very interested in the construction of a first bio-oil production plant in Loreto, taking into account that the cana brava plant can turn 80 percent of its biomass into bio-oil, a product that will be exported bringing revenue to the country." Vasquez also informed that SamoaFiber Holdings already has a two million ton per year request of bio-oil that will be exported to European and Asian markets.

Bio-oil, or pyrolysis oil, is a heavy kind of oil obtained from the (fast)pyrolysis of biomass ([earlier post](#)). This oil can be used either directly for heat and power generation or as a feedstock for the production of both synthetic biofuels (similar to diesel or heavy fuel oils) and hydrogen, while containing a large number of chemical building blocks from which a range of green products can be made (from bioplastics to lubricants and specialty chemicals) ([earlier post](#)):

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QUICK NOTES

Spanish company Ferry Group is to invest €42/US\$55.2 million in a project for the production of biomass fuel pellets in Bulgaria. The 3-year project consists of establishing plantations of paulownia trees near the city of Tran. Paulownia is a fast-growing tree used for the commercial production of fuel pellets. [Dnevnik](#) - Feb. 20, 2007.

Hungary's BHD Hőerőmű Zrt. is to build a 35 billion Forint (€138/US\$182 million) commercial biomass-fired power plant with a maximum output of 49.9 MW in Szerencs (northeast Hungary). [Portfolio.hu](#) - Feb. 20, 2007.

Tonight at 9pm, BBC Two will be showing a program on geo-engineering techniques to 'save' the planet from global warming. Five of the world's top scientists propose five radical scientific inventions which could stop climate change dead in its tracks. The ideas include: a giant sunshade in space to filter out the sun's rays and help cool us down; forests of artificial trees that would breath in carbon dioxide and stop the green house effect and a fleet futuristic yachts that will shoot salt water into the clouds thickening them and cooling the planet. [BBC News](#) - Feb. 19, 2007.

Archer Daniels Midland, the largest U.S. ethanol producer, is planning to open a biodiesel plant in Indonesia with Wilmar International Ltd. this year and a wholly owned biodiesel plant in Brazil before July, the Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday. The Brazil plant is expected to be the nation's largest, the paper said. Worldwide, the company projects a fourfold rise in biodiesel production over the next five years. ADM was not immediately available to comment. [Reuters](#) - Feb. 16, 2007.

Finnish engineering firm Pöyry Oyj has been awarded contracts by San Carlos Bioenergy Inc. to provide services for the first bioethanol plant in the Philippines. The aggregate contract value is EUR 10 million. The plant is to be build in the Province of San Carlos on the north-eastern tip of Negros Island. The plant is expected to deliver 120,000 liters/day of bioethanol and 4 MW of excess power to the grid. [Kauppalehti Online](#) - Feb. 15, 2007.

In order to reduce fuel costs, a Mukono-based flower farm which exports to Europe, is building its own biodiesel plant, based on using *Jatropha curcas* seeds. It estimates the fuel will cut production costs by up to 20%. [New Vision \(Kampala, Uganda\)](#) - Feb. 12,

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CROP NEWS



International research effort underway to sequence cassava genome, which may result in increased starch yields - [USDA Agricultural Research Service](#) - Aug. 30, 2006

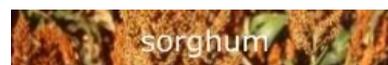
Cassava has one of the highest rates of CO2 fixation and sucrose synthesis for any C3 plant. With this in mind, researchers from Ohio State University develop transgenic cassava with starch yields up 2.6 times higher than normal plants by increasing the sink strength for carbohydrate in the crop. This means cassava makes for a 'super crop' when it comes to both CO2 fixation and carbohydrate production, i.e. sugars, the feedstock for ethanol - [Plant Biotechnology Journal](#) - Volume 4/Issue 4 - July 2006



Vietnam's Institute of Tropical Biology to invest in *Jatropha* research - [Le courrier du Vietnam](#) - Sept. 6, 2006



Genetic study proves humans have pushed orangutans to the brink of extinction; genetic decline coincides with establishment of oil palm plantations in Malaysia/Indonesia since the 1950/60s - [Public Library of Science / Biology](#) Volume 4/Issue 2 - February, 2006



Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania, develops sorghum and millet processing technologies suitable for local conditions in effort to empower

2007.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government has decided to use 10% biodiesel in its fleet of public buses. The world's largest city is served by the Toei Bus System, which is used by some 570,000 people daily. [Digital World Tokyo](#) - Feb. 12, 2007.

Fearing lack of electricity supply in South Africa and a price tag on CO2, WSP Group SA is investing in a biomass power plant that will replace coal in the Letaba Citrus juicing plant which is located in Tzaneen. [Mining Weekly](#) - Feb. 8, 2007.

In what it calls an important addition to its global R&D capabilities, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) is to build a new bioenergy research center in Hamburg, Germany. [World Grain](#) - Feb. 5, 2007.

EthaBlog's Henrique Oliveira interviews leading Brazilian biofuels consultant Marcelo Coelho who offers insights into the (foreign) investment dynamics in the sector, the history of Brazilian ethanol and the relationship between oil price trends and biofuels. [EthaBlog](#) - Feb. 2, 2007.

The government of Taiwan has announced its renewable energy target: 12% of all energy should come from renewables by 2020. The plan is expected to revitalise Taiwan's agricultural sector and to boost its nascent biomass industry. [China Post](#) - Feb. 2, 2007.

Production at Cantarell, the world's second biggest oil field, declined by 500,000 barrels or 25% last year. This virtual collapse is unfolding much faster than projections from Mexico's state-run oil giant Petroleos Mexicanos. [Wall Street Journal](#) - Jan. 30, 2007.

Dubai-based and AIM listed Teejori Ltd. has entered into an agreement to invest \$6 million to acquire a 16.7% interest in Bekon, which developed two proprietary technologies enabling dry-fermentation of biomass. Both technologies allow it to design, establish and operate biogas plants in a highly efficient way. Dry-Fermentation offers significant advantages to the existing widely used wet fermentation process of converting biomass to biogas. [Ame Info](#) - Jan. 22, 2007.

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited is to build a biofuel production plant in the tribal belt of Banswara, Rajasthan, India. The petroleum company has acquired 20,000 hectares of low value land in the district, which it plans to commit to growing jatropha and other biofuel crops. The company's chairman said HPCL was also looking for similar wasteland in the state of Chhattisgarh. [Zee News](#) - Jan. 15, 2007.

The Zimbabwean national police begins planting jatropha for a pilot project that must result in a daily production of 1000 liters of biodiesel. [The Herald \(Harare\)](#), [Via AllAfrica](#) - Jan. 12, 2007.

In order to meet its Kyoto obligations and to cut dependence on oil, Japan has started importing biofuels from Brazil and elsewhere. And even though the country has limited local bioenergy potential, its Agriculture Ministry will begin a search for

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Given the export orders, Vasquez commented: "We're going to work this as a joint effort between those of us who think these resources should be managed under sustainable development practices to give the world much cleaner and dependable energy products." He then concluded with a brief explanation of bio-oil use in electric power generation and other purposes.

SamoaFiber Holdings, Inc. is commercializing the production of bio-oil with initial production to take place in Peru. SFH is developing plantations in Eastern Peru to grow the Gynerium sagittatum plant and then further process the biomass into bio-oil via the proven fast pyrolysis (FP) processing method. FP plants are being established adjacent to the plantations and bio-oil shall be shipped to customers that require renewable fuels as mandated in Europe and the U.S. SFH is led by a management team that has extensive experience in acquiring and processing fiber into useful forms.

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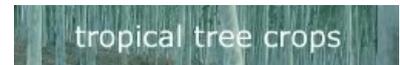
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South Africa blocks GM Sorghum project for fears over contamination of local wild sorghums - [Kruger Park](#) - Aug. 26, 2006



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Brazilian state of Acre intends to make cattle ranchers reforest land which they have cleared for grazing. The sustainable forestry policy is based on replanting economic tree crops such as mahogany, acai, Brazil nut and palms - [BBCNews](#) Sept. 27, 2006

Illegal deforestation of acacia for charcoal is becoming a serious problem in Kenya's Naivasha area. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement re-afforests with acacia but needs more support to win fight against illegal loggers - [Kenya Times](#) Sept. 5, 2006

Australian scientists are conducting a 'time-machine' experiment to see how eucalyptus trees cope with increased levels of CO2 and global warming. - [University of Western Sydney](#) Aug. 28, 2006



Bamboo planting can slow deforestation, scientists from the International Center for Research in Agroforestry in Nairobi, Kenya, say. Bamboo rapidly becoming economically beneficial crop with large potential for energy, bioremediation, and afforestation - [Chosun \(S.Korea\)](#) Aug. 30, 2006

"The beauty of miscanthus is that you only have to sow it once...Because of the way it grows, there is no need for fertilisers or chemicals", an English entrepreneur talks about his experience with Miscanthus as an energy crop - [Grantham Today](#) Aug. 8, 2006



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- [EUBIA: European Biomass Industry Association](#)
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industry will begin a search for natural resources, including farm products and their residues, that can be used to make biofuels in Japan. To this end, studies will be conducted at 900 locations nationwide over a three-year period. [The Japan Times](#) - Jan. 12, 2007.

Chrysler's chief economist Van Jolissaint has launched an arrogant attack on "quasi-hysterical Europeans" and their attitudes to global warming, calling the Stern Review 'dubious'. The remarks illustrate the yawning gap between opinions on climate change among Europeans and Americans, but they also strengthen the view that announcements by US car makers and legislators about the development of green vehicles are nothing more than window dressing. Today, the EU announced its comprehensive energy policy for the 21st century, with climate change at the center of it. [BBC News](#) - Jan. 10, 2007.

The new Canadian government is investing \$840,000 into BioMatera Inc., a biotech company that develops industrial biopolymers (such as PHA) that have wide-scale applications in the plastics, pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries. Plant-based biopolymers such as PHA are biodegradable and renewable. [Government of Canada](#) - Jan. 9, 2007.



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