

## **Hand soap serves practical and noble purpose**

Change is hard for people, no matter if the change is for the best—and doesn't hurt the environment. Bob Tipton, a maintenance worker who does the majority of the purchasing for Grazinglands Research Laboratory, knows this first hand. In fact, the change in question at this U.S. Department of Agriculture/Agriculture Research Service facility is about hands, specifically cleaning them with hand soap.

The staff at Grazinglands, located on 7,000 acres in El Reno, Okla., switched to biobased hand soap and a slew of other products manufactured from renewable resources, primarily soybeans, about two years ago.

Michael Downing, area procurement officer for the USDA's southern plains region, spearheaded the conversion in a concerted attempt to comply with new federal laws directing government agencies to give priority to biobased products. He even went so far as adding biobased purchasing as an agenda item at all monthly staff meetings and establishing a biobased purchasing officer at each USDA site.

The Grazingland staff's response to the soybean-based soap—Aterra foaming biobased hand soap by Green Line Bio-Hygiene Products—wasn't positive initially. Some complained that the soap was thinner than the old brand, although they acknowledged that it cleans just as well, Tipton said.

But the 60 or so employees at Grazinglands are committed to eliminating practices that hurt the environment and substituting ones that benefit agriculture. "The soap is good for the farmer and the impact on the farmer is a big deal," Tipton said. "Everybody is OK with the soap, but they're not warm and fuzzy over it."

A big advantage to this new biobased brand is Grazinglands was able to use the same soap dispensers -and the soap may feel different because it doesn't foam as much since air creates the bubbles, explains Green Line President Chuck Floyd. Customers have observed that the soap spreads and rinses off more easily than conventional soap, he added. Grazinglands uses about 12 gallons of the Aterra soap per year in 10 dispensers at a cost of \$17.66 a gallon, double what it spent for the conventional soap.



***Grazinglands employee Joe Barnett washes his hands with soap made from soybeans. The staff reports that it works just as well as the non-biobased soap that they had been using.***

Green Line produces a full line of hand soaps and sanitizers from Midwest corn and soybeans at a plant in Missouri and distributes them from Lisbon, Iowa. The products contain a combination of corn alcohol and soybean-based detergents with 67 to 95 percent biobased ingredients. Moisturizers and aloe also are ingredients in the soaps.

“They’re both environmentally friendly and skin friendly,” Floyd said. “Our theme is to buy green and think green and our focus is to have people shift to a green lifestyle.”

In pursuit of the company’s noble goals, Green Line is actively promoting its wares in Washington, D.C., where the corporate office is based. The firm is a member of the Greater Washington Board of Trade. The brand line also appears on the IntraMall site—an online purchasing system for the ARS and the National Institute of Health. Plus the products are available from the Green Line web site ([www.bio-hygiene.com](http://www.bio-hygiene.com)) by the case.

As a tireless cheerleader for the brand, Floyd is particularly excited about a marketing and outreach effort that placed the biobased soap into the palms of pubescent hands. Recently Green Line gave soap samples to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the Saturday Environmental Academy, a free educational program for students living in the Anacostia River watershed near the nation's capitol.

It's no surprise Grazinglands won the USDA Greening Award for its region in 2005 since it uses a host of other biobased products, including biodiesel fuel, oil, and grease for fleet maintenance and a corn-based product as an all-purpose cleaner—Safe Care® More than Glass Cleaner made by Gemtek Products of Phoenix, Ariz.

The move away from petroleum products hasn't been easy, Tipton concludes, but the biobased products get the job done—even when the individual mind set sometimes lags a little behind.

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