

America's development and use of alternative energy is good for the country and good for our environment.

I'm Dallas Tonsager, Under Secretary for Rural Development at USDA - our mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural Americans.

America's farmers have been on the forefront of the renewable fuels movement. President Obama and USDA are strong proponents for increasing the national supply of home-grown American renewable fuels as an alternative to foreign sources of oil.

Our mission at Rural Development is to help build competitive and sustainable 21st century rural communities. Supporting new - rural America - renewable energy markets is a step in this direction.

This is happening now – and what makes this most exciting is the fact that it doesn't matter whether you are talking about ethanol, wind power, biomass or other forms of alternative energy, the power being created is primarily derived from natural resources most abundant in rural America.

From day one of this Administration - development of renewable energy has been a top priority of the Department's efforts to rebuild and revitalize rural America.

How can Rural Development help – the 2008 Farm Bill gives one billion dollars in grants, loans and loan guarantees through USDA Rural Development to support development of alternative energy.

During 2010 - Rural Development staff are working with local producers to support commercial production of 2nd and 3rd generation biofuels and expect to fund several biofuels technologies, such as anaerobic digesters and algae-to-diesel uses. We expect more opportunities in the near future.

Creating renewable energy products will provide new economic opportunities for rural communities, while building a strong viable America for future generations.