



Press Release
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Contacts: See last 2 paragraphs

Jpg: Sorghum harvesting by Cornell University Institute of Genomic Diversity.

See Switchgrass & Sorghum Biomass Demonstration at 2010 Empire Farm Days

Seneca Falls, NY – Visitors to the August 10-12, 2010 Empire Farm Days will be able to see side-by-side demonstration plots of switchgrass and sorghum and learn about their potential as cellulosic ethanol biomass crops for New York.

The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Plant Materials Program in cooperation with Cornell University and the New York Farm Viability Institute has established a small demonstration plot of Cave-In-Rock switchgrass at the Rodman Lott & Son Farms in Seneca Falls, NY, host of the three-day Empire Farm Days agricultural showcase. Cornell University has two cellulosic sorghum plots there.

USDA NRCS Plant Materials Specialist Paul Salon says, “Switchgrass is being evaluated nationally and in the Northeast as a potential plant for use as a biofeedstock for cellulosic ethanol and for co-firing with coal for electricity and space heating by pelletizing.”

The switchgrass plot at the Rodman Lott & Son Farms was established May 15, 2007 using a Truax no-till drill following a year of no-till corn and soybeans. Seventy-five pounds of nitrogen fertilizer was applied in the spring of 2009. Salon says, “Switchgrass has the advantage of producing more biomass in a one cut system with less fertilizer than cool season forage grasses. The challenges are in slow establishment and weed competition.”

Sharon Mitchell, a Senior Research Associate with the Cornell University Institute of Genomic Diversity, says, “For the past two centuries, sorghum has been grown worldwide for food, feed, fodder and building material. Because of its minimal requirement for fertilizers, drought tolerance, ability to adapt to varied growing conditions, including marginal land, and high tonnage biomass yields, sorghum has recently been recognized as an ideal biofuel feedstock, particularly for farmers who do not wish to invest land in growing perennials.”

The demonstration plot at the Empire Farm Days event features a hybrid line from the Cornell Institute for Genomic Diversity sorghum breeding program.

Information presentations will be made immediately following field equipment demonstrations each day. A conservation garden behind the USDA tent includes switchgrass and other warm season grasses. A USDA tent exhibit on the demonstration plots will be staffed to answer farmers' questions about growing switchgrass and sorghum and their potential as biomass crops. For more information, contact, Paul Salon, 607-562-8404, 607-562-8516, or Sharon Mitchell, Cornell University, 607-254-4851.

The 300-acre Empire Farms Days agricultural extravaganza also includes DairyProfit Seminars, live animals, an Equine Center, farm safety and family life displays and activities, 600-plus representatives of agricultural institutions and organizations, GPS-equipped and compact tractor test drives, and chicken, beef and pork BBQ. For more details, contact Empire Farm Days Manager Melanie Wickham at 877-697-7837, mwickham@empirefarmdays.com. #

Empire Farm Days is hosted By: Rodman Lott & Son Farms, Seneca Falls, NY
Contact: Melanie Wickham, Toll Free 877-697-7837, mwickham@empirefarmdays.com