

KWMU
05/28/2008

Senator Bond discusses energy policy with plant scientists

By Julie Bierach

SAINT LOUIS, MO - Senator Kit Bond was in St. Louis Wednesday to take part in a panel discussion about energy policy.

The energy roundtable, which took place at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, focused on the role plant sciences play in the path to sustainable energy.

The meeting is a timely one, considering gasoline prices are close to \$4.00 a gallon.

Joining Senator Bond were top plant scientists in St. Louis. They talked about how plant-based alternative fuels are part of the solution to high gasoline prices.

Gerald Steiner, Executive Vice President of Monsanto says the key to meeting the demand for food and biofuel is by increasing yield sustainability. "No one wants to choose between food security and energy security. No family wants to choose between affordable fuel and affordable food. We need both and we believe that we can do both," said Steiner

Although the panel sought to focus on transportation fuel, the issue of nuclear energy crept into the discussion. Senator Bond says the U.S needs to re-think its position against nuclear power and off-shore drilling.

"It has been the not in my backyard syndrome that has cut off so much of our production. It stopped nuclear power," said Senator Bond. "ANWR, had the bill not been vetoed in authorizing it in 1995, we'd be getting a million gallons of gasoline a day."

The Associated Press
05/28/2008

Bond boosts ethanol industry

By Christopher Leonard

CREVE COUER, Mo. — Sen. Kit Bond renewed his commitment to the corn-based ethanol industry Wednesday, despite a growing number of critics who blame rising food prices on crop-based fuels.

"The cost-of-food impact of ethanol is almost immeasurable," Bond said. "Ethanol, by lowering the cost of transportation, is helping lower the cost of food."

Bond made his comments after hosting a panel discussion about the future use of biofuels at The Donald Danforth Plant Science Center here. The biofuels business has boomed since Congress mandated renewable fuel use in 2005. But the recent spike in global food prices has caused many to reconsider the wisdom of diverting food into gasoline tanks.

The current controversy didn't seem to dampen the enthusiasm for biofuels for the panel of researchers and professors who spoke.

"To me, it's polarizing the discussion. I am among the group of scientists who believe it's not an either-or choice," said Danforth Center President Roger Beachy. The center is helping boost biofuels use, having received a \$1.2 million grant to enhance oil production from soy beans.

Panelists laid out a number of research projects they say could one day help replace fossil fuels with biofuels, from energy producing algae to the use of trees to make cellulosic ethanol.

Washington University Professor Himadri Pakrasi said small "reactors" full of algae could be placed nearby coal-powered plants, using carbon emissions from the coal stacks as a feed stock to generate power.

Monsanto Co. Executive Vice President Jerry Steiner took a more conventional approach. He said corn-based ethanol will only become more practical as the corn-plant becomes more efficient. Genetic engineering and advanced breeding could make an acre of land yield twice as much corn as it does today by the year 2030, he said.

"Our focus is on growing yield sustainably," Steiner said. Monsanto, the world's biggest seed company, is trying to break further into the market for corn seeds by developing drought and pest-tolerant seeds.

As food prices climb, the biofuels industry is facing opposition from the Grocery Manufacturers Association, a food lobbying trade group. Spokesman Scott Openshaw said the group is calling on legislators to reconsider the mandates for renewable fuels.

"There is no question that there are many members of Congress, on both sides of the aisle, that are looking at this anew," Openshaw said in a phone interview.