

NBB Sustainability Task Force
April 2, 2008 Conference Call
Minutes

In attendance: V. Carver, E. Landsburg, D. Scott, L. Schaffer, D. Brinkmann, B. Young, K. Plocher, D. Smith, R. Burton, D. Fisher, J. Trucksess

Landsburg opened the call to discuss Sustainability Task Force objectives and developing a workplan, priorities, timeline for the task force, and develop a general common vision

Landsburg asked the group to brainstorm on what members think the task force should accomplish. She asked the group to build on email lists from previous week to put ideas out there and describing them so everyone understands what they are –not whittling the list down yet.

Brainstorming included:

STF should represent the broad spectrum of stakeholders.

May be impossible for volunteers to do what needs to be done. Need to have paid staff. Dues should support expert sustainability staff.

Education of NBB membership is important. Get membership to work on traceability of supply chain and impacts. Change will take years. Put pressure on suppliers and end users to make same changes NBB has. Being part of NBB should mean that they are moving toward better sustainable practices.

It would be great if 5 years from now, we have new feedstocks. Feedstock research should be a product of the STF.

Would like to see sustainability certification come out of the STF. The NBB STF should define sustainable biodiesel. They represent the largest group of stakeholders and are more qualified than outside groups. STF's sustainability standards should not be so strict it could not be implemented by stakeholders.

Several task force members commented that the current ANSI work on sustainability is not very good. The ANSI work only represents one group of stakeholders and is slighted toward their narrow view. Any standard must take into account all the stakeholders impacted.

Governments and other agencies are already working on sustainability definitions. The STF should get inputs to those groups.

DOE just released a fact sheet on myths vs facts that addresses ethanol, but does not include biodiesel. STF should pursue a DOE fact sheet on biodiesel.

Perhaps now is the time to set biodiesel apart from other biofuels. Biodiesel is now confused with other biofuels.

Would like to see in depth GHG studies and energy balance on variety of feedstocks-wells to wheels analysis. Would like to see the sustainability of growing palm defined, as well as other feedstocks. It will be important to have peer review of any studies. If studies are pursued by any certain group with an agenda, they can get any result desired if it is not peer reviewed to validate the methods are correct. Any analysis should be transparent. There are too many block box models out there that generate results that no one can confirm, or upon examination provide faulty conclusions. It is models like these and lack of peer review that have generated irresponsible media coverage.

A public relations media campaign is important. Rumors are circulating that petroleum interest groups are promoting negative biofuel press releases. We should work together with PR firms to reclaim the word biodiesel. Set it apart from other biofuels and refute the misinformation that is being generated. We need to clarify the food vs. fuel debate. That issue is commonly twisted out of proportion very easily by those that wish to do so. NBB should ready to respond immediately to press events such as the Time magazine story. NBB needs to immediately respond with press release disputing the misinformation spread by those campaigns. Statements issued by NBB could be co-authored by STF. It can't happen 2 weeks later. It needs to be quick. We need database of information with which to respond. We need a proactive Framework. It is often possible to know articles before come out. We should have a list of background papers. Being able to quickly respond to food vs. fuel is good example. Several ag groups are gearing up to be proactive on these issues. It can be hard to respond because attacks are coming so frequently. It takes time and money to battle effectively. In response to the campaigns by the petroleum industry, we should engage the food processing industry. The food processing industry is turning against biofuels, because they inaccurately believe biofuels are effecting their profit margins. NOIP food processors are blaming biofuels for causing starvation. We aren't in that dialogue to tell them that isn't true. It could be a full-time job just to monitor Wall Street Journal. That single source puts out a lot of negative press for biofuels. The Grocery Manufacturers Association in DC, have solicitation out for PR firm to run against the Renewable Fuels Standard. Cattlemans' Assoc asked Ag directors to write opposition to RFS. We need objective analysis for the causes of deforestation. What role do biofuels play? What would the elimination of biofuels do? The analysis that has gotten press coverage lately is shoddy and myopic. We should remain honest about unsustainable approaches. We will not defend bad practices. We should continue to pursue objective sources information, not just pointing to ourselves as the source for data. We should Pursue legislation that prevents bad practices and craft policy provisions to further ensure sustainability.

We would like to see biodiesel viewed as part of the solution. Fuels should be valued by their total environmental performance, not just BTUs.

NBB should sponsor on the ground projects with farmers to bring higher levels of sustainability to farming, crushing, and transportation of feedstocks. A long range objective should include establishing educational program with a broad target range. Perhaps curriculum can be gathered as it has been for other segments of biodiesel education?

Would like to see farmers get value returned to them for providing environmental services such as carbon and nitrogen management, etc.

RSPO says it is sustainable if its criteria are followed. We should look to other groups such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels, and identify if their definitions are acceptable to NBB and work with those groups

We need a vision for investment. Money must come from somewhere to define and defend the sustainability of biodiesel. Trucksess: We should put together wish list of documents & research. We could reach out to RFA, USDA contacts. Examine the palm campaign in Europe. Write in to Emily or group over the course of the week on our thoughts. Other groups may be willing to partner with us, because our message is pertinent to them and they agree with our message. We should point out why sustainability is critical to economic success of this industry. Of the three pillars of sustainability: environmental, social, economic; the most compelling is economic.

Landsburg: Let's address what we need to do to get there. What are our objectives and work items with timelines?

We want to meet face to face in June. Consider a recommendation to the governing board for money to fund a position or some part of our objective list. We should present a budget and survey to see what money is available from organizations, grants, or public funding. It takes an investment of money up front to pool it into greater funds.

Landsburg: We will meet again next week at the same time. At that meeting, we will set dates for future meetings/calls.

Landsburg: For next week, I ask the group to review our list of objectives and rank them, and send that to the group. Let's use email during the week to maximize our efficiency during the call. Let's focus on the advisory committee and forums for involving stakeholders. Next Wednesday was the deadline I set forth for defining parameters of the advisory committee. That was an aggressive timeframe. It is important that we get that done.

Plocher, Burton, and Young volunteered to look into electronic forums and technology as mediums to engage the committee. They will report Tuesday afternoon before the next call.

The next call will be an hour and fifteen minutes long. We need more time to discuss things.

We need to research the agenda for the June NBB meeting. We need to find a time, place, and funding for the group to travel and meet in person.

Don Scott added that the governing board has approved funding for a position in DC to be titled Director of Sustainability and Strategic Communications, and NBB staff are currently pursuing funding from other sources to do sustainability work. These ongoing efforts should not de-emphasize the Task Force's recommendations. The Task Force should continue to prioritize their needs for funding and staffing. Task Force recommendations will help make those efforts become real.

Don and Emily will practice with webinar software during the week. Next Wednesday's call will utilize the webinar, but we will continue to use the same phone number to spare STF members the cost of the phone call.

Submitted by D. Scott 4/2/08