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Cellulosic Biorefineries – where are we today and tomorrow?

These questions have been discussed at a panel of the 2016 BIO World Congress on Industrial Biotechnology. While large-scale cellulosic ethanol from crop residues is seeing challenges in financing and logistics, continued advancements in technology will allow overcoming these hurdles in the coming years. Corn fiber ethanol is a robust solution for maximizing the cellulosic gallons compared to other approaches. It is able to build off the existing infrastructure reducing costs and utilizes a feedstock that they are familiar in collecting and storing. This technology brings about 7 to 10 million gallons of cellulosic ethanol from a 100 million gallon corn ethanol plant and could bring up to 1 billion gallons across the U.S. Economic, long-term sustainable and reliable supply of feedstock is challenging. Starting from the farm to the end user, the continued development and industrialization of supply chains is critical in developing cellulosic biorefineries. Bioindustrial Innovation Canada is working to foster collaboration and partnerships, which is critical to the development of any new technology. Clariant works to reduce the costs of developing cellulosic ethanol with integrated enzyme production, resulting in lower costs and making the plan independent from external process. Clariant is partnering with Mercedes-Benz in running vehicles on 20 % ethanol to help increase the market for biofuels. Shandon Tranlin Group, a Chinese pulp and paper company has developed technologies to produce pulp and paper from about a million tons of waste straw. Utilizing agricultural residues will help reduce the costs of developing these cellulosic biofuels. This has allowed the company to move forward with the development of a pilot plant and working to scale up a commercial scale facility.