

Iowa co. to build biodiesel plant

By [Scott Rochat](#)

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Renewable Energy Group, an Iowa company, will start building a biodiesel plant in Emporia this summer.

The Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas announced this morning that it had reached a deal with the company. The plant will be capable of making 60 million gallons of fuel a year and would employ about 30 people.

The \$65 million plant will be located on a 41-acre site just east of Norfolk Iron and Metal. The site still needs to have its zoning changed from light industrial to heavy industrial. In addition, the RDA said, the area's natural gas capacity will have to be upgraded to accommodate the plant. Discussions on that will take place between the city, REG and Kansas Gas Service.

REG is based out of Ralston, Iowa, where it owns a 12 million gallon-per-year plant. Company president Nile Ramsbottom said the company started looking at Emporia because of its location and an ongoing partnership with soybean processor Bunge North America.

"They have a large soybean processing facility there, so they're a natural supplier of soybean oil to us," Ramsbottom said. "And (Emporia) is in a site where there's animal fats available from the feedyards."

Both materials can be used to produce biodiesel fuel.

Ramsbottom also said the company was impressed with the "very open relations" it had with the RDA while negotiating the deal.

He said that ground should be broken sometime in the next two months. The plant's opening is projected for the summer of 2008.

Ramsbottom said there should be no odor and no noise from the plant.

"Anything that doesn't go into the product is recaptured, if you will, and reprocessed," he said. "As industrial prospects go, we make a very nice neighbor."

REG spokesperson Alicia Clancy said that by the end of 2007, the company should have agreements in place to market 212 million gallons of biodiesel fuel nationwide. In 2006, she said, the U.S. consumed about 200 million gallons of biodiesel.

RDA president Kent Heermann estimated that the plant's construction would require about 100 jobs.

The RDA will hold an informational meeting on the plant at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday at Flint Hills Technical College, in conference rooms B and C. An overview of the project will be presented from 4:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. followed by a chance to speak with REG representatives from 5:15 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Courtesy of The Emporia Gazette
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