

“Sustainable Mobility: Ethanol Talks – India”

A day-long seminar “Sustainable Mobility: Ethanol Talks – India” was organized in New Delhi on 24th February 2020. It was jointly organized by ISMA (Indian Sugar Mills Association), the Brazilian Government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Apex-Brasil (Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency), UNICA (Brazilian Sugarcane Industry Association), and APLA (Brazil's Ethanol Cluster).

The goal of the seminar was to promote ethanol as a modern and sustainable option for mobility, capable of generating immediate positive impacts on energy security and health, reduction of local air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. The seminar brought together all those who are concerned with energy security, health and environmental quality.

Many cities in India, including the Capital city- New Delhi, are facing acute problem of environment pollution. The need of the hour is to look at developing alternative vehicular fuel which is green and environment-friendly. Ethanol blended petrol is a bio-fuel, and has an important role in reducing pollution. Brazil is a pioneer in using ethanol-blended fuel (derived from sugarcane), as the most successful alternative automobile fuel till date. It is important for India to learn from the ethanol blending experience of Brazil and how it overcame hurdles during initial days of ethanol programme implementation.

The seminar had an in-depth panel of ethanol experts and representatives from Brazilian Government, who were catalysts in successful implementation of ethanol blending programme in Brazil. The seminar was very informative, thanks to the incisive and issue-based insights given by the Brazilian delegation members on ethanol blending programme.

Speaking at the seminar, Mr. Subodh Singh, Joint Secretary, DFPD, Government of India, said that in order to boost country's ethanol production, the Government has approved 362 projects with an investment of Rs.18,600 crore for enhancing additional ethanol production capacity of 400 crore litres in the next two years. This will take total ethanol production capacity to 755 crore litres, which will help the country achieve 20 per cent ethanol blending with petrol by 2030. He explained how the Government is playing a very pro-active role to augment ethanol production capacities as also lay the roadmap for a successful 10% ethanol blending by 2022 and 20% by 2030.

President of Datagro, Dr. Plinio Nastari, known for his comprehensive knowledge on ethanol, stressed upon the need to have a price parity between sugar and ethanol, for the success of ethanol blending programme in India and achieving 10% blending target. He said there needs to be proper regulation for ethanol production and distribution, in order to scale up the programme. The President of ISMA, Mr. Vivek Pittie agreed that there should be a long-term price parity on ethanol and sugar, and said that the price parity is very important when sugar prices fluctuate, and also at times when it increases.

Other dignitaries from Brazil who attended the seminar were- Dr. Evandro Gussi- President and CEO of UNICA, Mr. Flavio Castellari- Executive Director of APLA, Minister Elias Luna Santos- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Marcio Félix- Former Deputy Minister of Mines and Energy & Secretary of Petroleum, Natural Gas and Biofuels, Brazil and others.

From the Indian side, important officials shared their views which included Mr. Subodh Singh- Joint Secretary (Sugar), DFPD, GoI, Mr. Sunil Kumar-JS (Petroleum), GOI, Dr. Sangita M. Kasture- Ministry of Science & Technology, GoI, Mr. Shantanu Gupta- Chief General Manager, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. and Mr. P.K. Banerjee- SIAM. Senior sugar industry members who shared their insights at the seminar were- Mr. Tarun Sawhney- Past President of ISMA, Mr. Vivek Pittie- President- ISMA, Mr. Samir Somaiya, Past President- ISMA and others.

The seminar turned out to be quite informative, thanks to the valuable insights shared by the Brazilian delegation, which included their experiences regarding the issues faced by them during the rollout of the ethanol programme in Brazil, which is a lesson for India's ethanol stakeholders, which include both ethanol suppliers and buyers. The industry hopes for continued support and cooperation in the future too, in this sphere.