

China enlarges bio-ethanol fuel coverage

April 1 (Xinhua)--NANNING --South China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region became the 10th Chinese locality to have replaced gasoline and diesel oil with bio-ethanol fuel on Tuesday out of environmental and energy efficiency concerns.

Petrol stations in all the 14 cities of Guangxi began to sell bio-ethanol fuel on Tuesday and in two weeks, traditional petrol and diesel oil will be phased out, said Fu Jian, an official in charge of transport with the regional government.

Fu said about 350,000 motor vehicles and more than 3 million motorbikes will have their tanks cleaned up for the fuel change.

Presently nine other Chinese provinces are using ethanol fuel including Jilin , Liaoning and Heilongjiang provinces in the northeast, Henan and Hebei provinces in the north, Anhui , Shandong and Jiangsu provinces in the east and the central Hubei Province .

Guangxi is the first Chinese locality to commercially produce ethanol fuel with cassava instead of grain. The region produces 7.8 million tonnes of cassava a year, more than 60 percent of China 's total.

It is home to China 's first bio-ethanol fuel production base that went into operation in December in the coastal city of Beihai . The base is designed to produce 200,000 tonnes of biofuel annually out of about 1.5 million tonnes of cassava.

China banned the use of grain for ethanol production last year to ensure sufficient food supplies, and biofuel manufacturers have since turned to sweet potatoes, sorghum and straw stalks instead.

Ethanol fuel is believed to help ease China 's energy supply bottleneck. Customs statistics say China 's net crude oil import climbed at least 12 percent year on year to reach 160 million tonnes in 2007, and the country's reliance on crude oil import is at least 46 percent.

It is also believed to help cut carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide emissions, by around 30 percent and 10 percent respectively.

Chinese officials said the country's ethanol fuel sales will reach 30 million tonnes in 2010 to make up half of the total gasoline supplies

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