



Just the Facts...

BIOBASED PRODUCTS *Federal Agencies Required to Purchase Biobased Products as Part of Affirmative Procurement (AP) Programs*

What are Biobased Products? Biobased products are commercial or industrial products (other than food or feed) that utilize biological products or renewable domestic agricultural (plant, animal, and marine) or forestry materials. Examples of biobased products are soy-based inks, ethanol fuels and cleaners, and particleboard made from kenaf.

Why should we buy them? Buying biobased products supports the U.S. agricultural and forestry industries by creating new demands for the products of American farms, ranches, and forests. Biobased products are produced from renewable plant and animal sources, and are generally more environmentally preferable than their petroleum-based counterparts. They are usually biodegradable, are easily recyclable, and pose fewer hazards when disposed. Another reason to “buy bio” is because it is required by law. Title IX of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (the 2002 Farm Bill) required Federal agencies to show preference for biobased products as part of their AP programs. When products are designated, Federal agencies purchasing those products must show preference for biobased content, just as they currently must show preference for recycled products under the EPA Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines. This will require expansion of existing Federal agency AP programs to include biobased products.

Are there specific products I should buy? There are currently six USDA-designated biobased items (mobile equipment hydraulic fluids, roof coatings; water tank coatings; penetrating lubricants; diesel fuel additives; and bedding, bed linens and towels). The USDA is considering products in 11 categories (lubricants; construction materials; alternative fuels; fibers, paper, and packaging; adhesives; paints and coatings; landscaping materials; solvents and cleaners; plant and vegetable inks; plastics; and sorbents). Final designation of an item is made when USDA has compiled and evaluated sufficient information on availability, relative price, performance, and environmental and public

health benefits. Federal agencies, to include Army installations, must begin showing preference for biobased products 1 year from item designation.

Are there exceptions? The same exceptions apply to purchasing biobased products as currently apply to products made with recovered materials: when **price, performance or availability** are prohibitive, there is no requirement to purchase the biobased product. However, the purchaser must document such decisions if the purchase falls above the micropurchase threshold. In addition, where there is a conflict between the biobased purchasing preference program and recovered material preference program (Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines for EPA-designated items); the recovered material preference takes precedence.

Where can I get more information? For more information on the biobased products preference program visit the Federal Biobased Products Preferred Procurement Program web site at <http://www.biobased.oce.usda.gov/>, or the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive site at <http://www.ofee.gov/gp/bioprod.html>.

Is training available? Training on biobased purchasing is needed for government purchase card holders, specifications writers, engineers, planners, and contracting, acquisition, environmental, and public works personnel. This may be held in conjunction with initial or refresher AP or Green Procurement training. The USACHPPM currently offers Green Procurement training for all Federal agency personnel. The training team has conducted seminars on such topics since February 2000. To schedule Green Procurement training at your facility, contact:

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