



Growing a future of  
CLEAN RENEWABLE ENERGY

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Genera Energy and Alcoa Partner to Grow Switchgrass in Blount County; *Planting has significant environmental benefit***

(Knoxville, TN)- Land owned by Alcoa Inc, Tennessee Operations, is now being used to grow a popular perennial grass known for producing cellulosic ethanol.

Approximately 238 acres of switchgrass have been planted on property that Alcoa leases to a local farmer who participates in an incentive program with Genera Energy, a Knoxville-based renewable energy company, and the University of Tennessee.

The planting occurred in early June. Farmer Gerald Orr, a first-time participant in Genera's switchgrass program, planted three varieties of seed, the standard and two improved varieties of seed that are designed to give farmers and researchers useful information on seed stock performance including drought resistance and increased yield.

Alcoa's switchgrass acreage could produce more than 160,000 gallons of ethanol a year. Warm season grasses, which include switchgrass, have significant environmental benefits as well. Research has shown that the grass can sequester between one and two tons of carbon per acre in the soil on an annual basis. Switchgrass also provides for increased soil stability, improved soil structure, and an abundance of wildlife habitat.

"With more than 1,600 acres of property here in Blount County, Alcoa is constantly looking for environmentally-friendly, effective uses of the land," said Dave Hensley, property manager and interim smelting plant manager. "We are pleased that Mr. Orr is involved in this program and we believe his effort align with the 'green' qualities of Alcoa's products. Recycling aluminum to save energy and offsetting oil consumption with biomass go well together."

And, Orr is also pleased to be a first-time participant in the program.

"Participating in the switchgrass program is giving me the opportunity to put this acreage to use for something that will hopefully have long-lasting benefits," said Orr. "I look forward to seeing the switchgrass crop continue to grow and prosper."

Switchgrass is one of the primary feedstocks used to produce cellulosic ethanol. Genera Energy and UT currently contract with 60 farmers in East Tennessee to grow the plant for bioenergy production, specifically cellulosic ethanol, on approximately 5,200 acres. The farms are located within a 50-mile radius of one of the world's first demonstration-scale cellulosic ethanol biorefineries, located in Vonore, Tennessee. The biorefinery opened in late 2009 and will be producing cellulosic ethanol from switchgrass by the end of 2010.

"We currently grow switchgrass in nine East Tennessee counties," said Dr. Sam Jackson, Genera's Vice President of Feedstock Operations and Research Assistant Professor at UT. "Our goal is to help farmers produce healthy switchgrass that can then be turned into energy, such as cellulosic ethanol or biopower through combustion with coal.

"Many of our farmers are growing switchgrass on under-utilized land, or land that was not being used for any type of production," added Dr. Jackson. "Switchgrass is unique in that it thrives on this type of land. It also can be grown using conventional farming equipment during the planting and harvesting."

Switchgrass takes approximately three years to mature but once a full stand is established, it is productive for over a decade and requires no replanting. In addition to serving as a source for cellulosic ethanol, switchgrass also improves soil quality and sequesters carbon.

*About Genera Energy*

*Genera Energy is a for-profit limited liability company wholly owned by the University of Tennessee Research Foundation. Genera provides a vehicle to leverage state and federal funding with private research and development investments, strategic partnerships and collaborations to further the research, economic development, and clean energy objectives of the state and the University of Tennessee. Genera focuses on developing integrated biomass supply chain solutions and strategic partnerships to support the bioenergy industry in Tennessee. Genera's portfolio of public-private clean energy projects includes biomass, biofuels and energy crops. <http://www.generaenergy.net>*

*About Alcoa*

*Alcoa's Tennessee Operations is the world's largest producer of rolled aluminum can sheet for beverage cans and is based in Blount County, Tennessee. Locally, it employs more than 1,000 at its smelting and fabrication plants in Blount County, its hydropower facilities, and its downtown Knoxville office. <http://www.alcoa.com>.*

*About University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture*

*The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture provides instruction, research and public service through the UT College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources; the UT College of Veterinary Medicine; UT AgResearch, including its statewide system of 10 research and education centers; and UT Extension with offices in all 95 Tennessee counties. . <http://agriculture.tennessee.edu>.*

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