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Showing off the latest in agricultural science and technology, Penn State Ag Progress Days celebrated the 30th anniversary of its permanent site on August 15-17 at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center located in Rock Springs, Pennsylvania.

A new addition to the three-day event this year was the Agricultural Renewable Energy exhibit, which presented Penn State's collaborative efforts with state and industry partners to aid in the development and adoption of renewable energy solutions in Pennsylvania.

Staff members from the Energy Institute were on the scene to educate attendees and raise awareness about some of the latest findings research related to alternative energy derived from farms and forest. The Institute's displays highlighted ongoing research in biofuel gasification and combustion. Several topics, including energy production from switchgrass, biodeisel, and other biofuels, generated many questions for the staff to answer.

"The pelletizing of switchgrass as a substitute for wood pellets was a topic of much discussion," said Research Assistant Ronald Wincek. "Overall, a growing concern with our dependence on foreign oil and decreasing reserves of fossil fuels was a major factor drawing people to this year's EI displays."

A display on wood gasification research explained how the gasification process has several environmental benefits—including the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions (greenhouse gas), reduced fossil fuel consumption and the reduction of SO₂ and NO_x emissions (acid rain gases). An investigation tested the gasification of red maple and poplar wood and found that both woods produced similar amounts of combustible gases, but red maple produced more hydrogen than poplar.

While Wednesday drew the largest crowd, Wincek said that all three days yielded a steady flow of attendees past the displays.

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