

How NZ could become biofutures powerhouse

Carbon News, 5 December 2016



Ethanol plant at Charters Towers, Queensland

NEW ZEALAND could easily become a Queensland-style biofutures superpower, local industry leaders say.

The Bioenergy Association’s board next week will debate a strategy to get measures in place to let New Zealand claim a share of the multi-billion-dollar bioenergy and biochemicals industries.

Chief executive Brian Cox says that what Queensland is doing is inspiring, and there is no reason New Zealand shouldn’t do the same.

“If Queensland can do it, New Zealand can do it,” he told Carbon News.

Last month, markets researcher Joel Allen told the Bioenergy Association conference that **no country in the world** has developed a bioenergy industry without state support.

Cox says the plan by Queensland’s state government, to develop a billion-dollar sustainable biofutures industry exporting biotechnology and bioproducts and creating thousands of high-quality jobs, is the sort of plan New Zealand needs.



Brian Cox

Plans to 2026

“It’s all I would ever hope our own government would say and do,” Cox said. “Queensland’s Biofutures Roadmap is a great document and reflects my own views on what we should be doing.”

The [Biofutures Roadmap](#), developed by the Queensland Government under Labor Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, plans development of the industry to 2026.

The state already has three biorefinery plants producing 160 million litres of ethanol and biodiesel for the domestic transport network and generating \$110 million a year in revenue, as well as a biocommodities pilot plant, a solar biofuels research centre and a microalgal biofuels and bioproducts plant pilot plant and research project.

With the global biofutures sector expected to be worth \$1128 billion by 2022, Queensland plans to use its competitive advantages to get a sizeable slice of the action.



Annastacia Palaszczuk

“Queensland is fortunate to have all the right advantages to make biofutures happen,” Palaszczuk says in the foreword to the roadmap.

Envy of world

“We have the people. We have the ideas. We have the infrastructure. We have world-class research in both agricultural and bioindustrial product development. We have the climate and a lifestyle that is the envy of the world.

“Located at the gateway to the Asia-Pacific, Queensland is ideally neighboured with some of the fastest growing economies in the world.”

But there are impediments, she says, and that’s why the state government is stepping in.

“We need greater collaboration and movement between the science base and business community; we need a bigger pipeline of world-leading, investment-ready business opportunities; and we need the private sector capital and skills to turn these opportunities into products, profits and jobs.

“Internationally, biofutures is in a rapid phase of development, driven by government support and strategic alliances between technology providers, research institutions and raw material suppliers. As a government we are ready to implement the actions necessary to drive this industry forward.

Paying dividends

“If you want to be a global innovation leader, you have to articulate to the world a long-term plan. We cannot wait for the world to come to us, we must tell the world we are ready.”

Bioenergy in the news

It appears the plan is already paying off. Queensland's energy, biofutures and water supply minister Mark Bailey says it was a significant factor in convincing [Southern Oil Refining](#) to bring its commercial-scale advanced biofuels programme to the state.

"The company has committed \$150 million to build the refinery which will be able to produce 200 million litres of advanced biofuel annually," Bailey told the recent Bioenergy Australia conference.

"This biofuel will be suitable for military, marine and aviation use. For the Gladstone area this will deliver 30 new construction jobs and 18 ongoing jobs when it moves into operational phase. If the full-scale commercial plant proceeds, 90 construction jobs and 64 operational jobs will be created."

And the state is now going after bigger fish; the United States Navy.

Huge customer

"The Premier recently signed a historic statement of cooperation with Thomas Hicks, the Deputy Under-Secretary of the United States Navy," Bailey said.

"The United States Navy is potentially the biggest biofuels customer in the world. This deal puts the Palaszczuk Government right there as a partner with the Navy to get our share of that investment. We want Queensland to be a key provider to the United States Navy's [Great Green Fleet](#) initiative."

An international call from the Queensland Government for interest in building biorefineries in the state has drawn 26 requests for information."

Earlier this year, the Crown Research Institute Scion [told Parliament](#) that the market for bioenergy and other products from forest biomass, including composites, chemicals and plastics, would be boosted by the ratification of the Paris Agreement, which seeks to hold global warming to between 1.5deg and 2deg.

Energy strategy

Green Party energy spokesperson Gareth Hughes says his party would support calls from the New Zealand bioenergy industry for a Queensland-style biofutures plan.

"We think the Government should consider it as part of its [new energy strategy](#)," he told Carbon News.

"We also have a policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent (below 1990 levels) by 2030, which will require big energy users like (dairy company) Fonterra and (electricity generator) Genesis to switch to bioenergy."

Story copyright © Carbon News 2016