



CONTACT: Anne Kinzel
Phone: 515-294-8473
Email: akinzel@iastate.edu
OR

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CONTACT: Amy Kohmetscher
Phone: (402) 580-0765
Email: kohmetscher.1@osu.edu

CenUSA TO OFFER A FREE ONLINE COURSE ON INTRODUCTION TO PERENNIAL GRASSES FOR BIOFUELS

(AMES, IA): CenUSA Bioenergy is offering a free, on-line self-paced course covering a variety of topics related to perennial grasses intended for use as biofuel. The course is open to the public and offers participation badges. The class is geared for students aged 14 and up, with no special background needed. Topics covered include an introduction to perennial grasses as a feedstock, perennial grass growth and development, establishment of perennial grass stands, stand management, and biochar as a co-product. Independent learners will discover these topics in a self-paced manner through the use of videos, extension articles, lessons, and quizzes. To get started and enroll in the course students can go to the CenUSA Bioenergy MOOC website and create a free, password protected account at <https://cfaesmoodle.osu.edu/course/view.php?id=11>.

The course goal is for students to understand how and why perennial grasses are an ideal option as a feedstock for biofuels. The course begins with an introduction to the CenUSA program and their research into creating sustainable biofuels systems. The course then goes into detail about the perennial grass known as switchgrass and continues with information on the physiology and growth of perennial grasses. The next two modules look into establishing and managing perennial grass stands. The course concludes with a module on the basics, research, and benefits of biochar. More information is available in a short video which can be accessed at <https://iastate.box.com/s/biunzrq6g1koce3lt8hs0dmsdazdny02>.

CenUSA Bioenergy is an ambitious Iowa State University-based, USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) sponsored, research project investigating the creation of a Midwestern sustainable biofuels and bioproducts system. Ken Moore, Iowa State University Charles F. Curtiss Distinguished Professor of Agriculture and Life Sciences is the project director for the eight institution CenUSA network (Iowa State University, Purdue University; The Ohio State University; University of Wisconsin; University of Minnesota; University of Nebraska-Lincoln; University of Illinois; University of Vermont; USDA Agricultural Research Service).

At CenUSA our vision is to create a Midwestern regional system for producing advanced transportation fuels and bioproducts derived from perennial grasses grown on land that is either unsuitable or marginal for row crop production. In addition to producing advanced biofuels, the proposed system will improve the sustainability of existing cropping system by reducing agricultural runoff of nutrients and soil and increasing carbon sequestration. Lear more at www.cenusa.iastate.edu

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