

Lube Report

Engine Oils Join Feds' Biolubes List

BY GEORGE GILL (/SDM/GEORGE-GILL-3.HTML) • JUNE 19, 2013

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's BioPreferred program finalized its 10th round of procurement regulations, which specify that engine crankcase oil with at least 25 percent bio-based content will receive federal procurement preference.

The new rule is effective July 11, 2013. By June 11, 2014, federal agencies and government contractors must ensure their relevant procurement specifications require the use of bio-based engine oils.

"USDA has received information from a major marketer of engine crankcase oils stating that they have a line of products with bio-based content between 25 and 30 percent," USDA stated. "In light of this new information, we are revising the minimum content to 25 percent," up from the previous 21 percent. USDA said that "establishing the minimum bio-based content at a level that is achieved by a major marketer of engine oils provides more flexibility to purchasing agencies and more public visibility for the BioPreferred program."

In fall 2012, the USDA requested all interested lubricant manufacturers submit samples of bio-based engine oils they were interested in selling under the BioPreferred program. Several motor oil brands submitted samples. Bio-content among the sample formulations submitted ranged from single digits to more than 50 percent.

Biosynthetic Technologies CEO Allen Barbieri told Lube Report that of the eight submitted formulations whose bio-content exceeded 25 percent, six were formulated with the company's Estolide biosynthetic base oils, which are base oils synthesized from fatty acids found in vegetable oils. The base Estolide molecule structure, which performs similar to polyalphaolefins, was invented by researchers at the USDA. Biosynthetic Technologies sells the base oil under its "Lubrigreen" brand.

"Our bio-content is 80 to 95 percent, depending on which viscosity you use," Barbieri explained. "In order to get to the 25 percent minimum, they could use less of our [base] oil than other oils that have some bio-content but far less than what we have."

Manufacturers of engine oils which meet BioPreferred bio-based content requirements can post company, product, performance testing and contact information in the BioPreferred Program's web-based catalog at www.biopreferred.gov (<http://www.imakenews.com/eletra/gow.cfm?z=lng%2C649899%2C0%2C4597724%2Cb11>).

According to the regulations, engine oils within the bio-based product category can compete with rerefined lubricant oil products made with recycled content because such products were designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to receive preference in federal agencies' purchasing programs.

Also under the 10th procurement regulations round, water turbine bearing oils will need a minimum of 46 percent biobased content to be eligible.

The federally administered BioPreferred program was created by the 2002 Farm Bill as a preferred procurement program to increase purchase and use of bio-based products within the federal government.

For more information on federal procurement guidelines for engine oils with bio-based content, view the June 11, 2013 [Federal Register](http://www.imakenews.com/eletra/gow.cfm?z=lng%2C649899%2C0%2C6656056%2Cb11) item (<http://www.imakenews.com/eletra/gow.cfm?z=lng%2C649899%2C0%2C6656056%2Cb11>) online.