

Why Standards Are Important

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Obviously every country has to go through the phase of enthusiastic home-brewed biodiesel. But make this simple comparison: imagine you discovered an oil well in your backyard. Would you take the crude oil into your kitchen, tip it into a pot, heat it, try to do some cracking and fill whatever comes out into your car? Probably not!

You certainly wouldn't do it to a modern fast-running diesel engine, which requires a high quality fuel -- whether fossil or bio -- it does not matter. Especially if you're fueling a low emission, highly energy efficient diesel engine as demanded by law and by today's customers. It requires the highest quality fuels and a proven way to achieve, control and maintain such quality is through the use of a fuel standard. It is a must if we want to win and maintain the confidence of diesel engine manufacturers.

It took two years before Austrian experts published the first biodiesel fuel standard - ON C 1190 for RME or rapeseed-oil-methyl-ester in 1991. It became the standard for numerous diesel engine warranties issued by all the main tractor companies. During those two years, various trials were run; failures were analyzed, and areas for improvement were noted and undertaken. As a result in July 1997, ON C 1190 for RME was followed by ON C 1191 for FAME or fatty-acid-methyl-ester, which defines the quality of a fuel not by its feedstock but what goes into the tank.

Later that year, the DIN E 51606 (also based on FAME) was published in German, the world's leading modern diesel engine manufacturer. Other national standards were also established in the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Sweden and the United States. Customers could now feel confident and could get warranties from diesel engine manufacturers and injection pump producers. It also provided transport reliability and helped create a positive image in the market.

In recent months, a CEN-draft standard for biodiesel has been developed. The draft, which would be valid throughout Europe, was achieved thanks to the close cooperation - and sometimes intense discussion - between the diesel engine industry, mineral oil companies and biodiesel producers. A final CEN-standard may be published by the end of 2002 under the new code of EN 14214.

So who would you trust the "young" biodiesel producer - not able to describe, characterize and analyze his "product" - or those biodiesel producers, who have their product regularly analyzed for quality by independent, well-equipped laboratories? The first is high-risk, the second is assured reliable mobility. The first is homemade, undefined methyl ester. The second is professionally-produced, high-quality biodiesel, ready to run any modern diesel engine with Common-Rail injection systems at the lowest fuel consumption, with increased power and amazingly reduced emission profiles, given that the injection process is electronically fine-tuned.