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U.S. Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Tours Virent to Highlight How Biobased Products and Innovative Technologies Can Strengthen Rural America

Virent Showcases Technologies that Convert a Variety of Agricultural Crops to High Value Products

Madison, Wisconsin – April 18, 2012 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack today visited Virent, Inc. to observe how the company’s technology to manufacture biobased products from plant materials can create sustainable products and produce jobs in rural America. Vilsack met with company employees and toured Virent’s demonstration facility to learn more about Virent’s patented BioForming™ process to convert a variety of agricultural products – including sugar, wood, and agricultural waste – into bio-based products.

Virent is working toward deploying a first commercial scale plant to produce chemicals and fuels from renewable biomass that will support rural economic development, create new jobs, and provide markets for farm commodities. “Biorefineries have the potential to transform the economic landscape of rural America – from corn stover in Wisconsin, Iowa and Michigan, to miscanthus in Georgia, to woody biomass in places as diverse as Oregon and Louisiana,” said Lee Edwards, Virent President and CEO.

“Technologies like Virent’s mean that plentiful, plant derived sugars have the potential to compete with petroleum as a source of energy. Direct replacement, drop-in products generated from biomass are sustainable alternatives to petroleum, and leveraging our unmatched agricultural resources to promote energy security and rural economic growth,” said Edwards.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack said, “We should rely on innovative companies and the productivity of American farms and ranchers to produce our household items and power our cars and trucks – not foreign oil. If we are able to produce more energy here at home and build a manufacturing economy producing bio-based goods, we’ll generate middle-class jobs and strengthen our economy in the long run.”

During the tour of Virent's facility, Edwards and Secretary Vilsack discussed how renewable fuels and bio-based products have the potential to replace over 90 percent of a barrel of oil, including the chemicals used to make many consumer goods, such as plastic bottles to clothing, to fishing lines, tires and soap. Virent recently signed agreements with the Coca-Cola Company to provide the technology and biobased chemical Paraxylene to create 100 percent plant-based, renewable PlantBottle® packaging. Coca-Cola Company and Cargill representatives, both strategic partners and funders of Virent's, were onhand to meet Secretary Vilsack and participate in the tour.

"It was a tremendous opportunity for Virent to meet with Secretary Vilsack and demonstrate how we are working with our strategic partners to provide a viable option to replace imported oil – along with the whole variety of sustainable products now derived from a barrel of crude," Edwards said.

About Virent

Virent is replacing crude oil by creating the chemicals and fuels the world demands using a wide range of naturally-occurring, renewable resources. Its patented technology features catalytic chemistry to convert plant-based materials into a full range of products identical to those made from petroleum, including gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, and chemicals for plastics and fibers. The products are drop-in replacements that enable full utilization of existing logistics infrastructure without blending limitations. The development of Virent's BioForming® technology platform is supported through strategic partners including Cargill, Coca-Cola, Honda and Shell, as well as 125 employees based in Madison, Wisconsin. The company has received several grants from the U.S. Departments of Commerce, Energy and Agriculture and has been recognized with many honors, including the World Economic Forum Technology Pioneer award and the EPA's Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Award. Please learn more at www.Virent.com.

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