



**April 5, 2016 - One hectare of energy willow was planted in Cucuruzenii de Sus village, Orhei district, on the farmland owned by a vocational school from Orhei town. The event gathered almost 100 school students and teachers, government officials, development partners and journalists. The energy plants are an alternative energy solution promoted by the Energy and Biomass Project in Moldova, with financial support of the European Union.**

Another hectare of energy willows will be planted in Cuhurestii de Sus village, Floresti district. Both pilot vocational schools from Orhei and Floresti will also have one hectare plantation of energy acacia.

"We are happy that new initiatives like the one we are launching today will show innovative methods of developing and using biomass fuels. Through this, we will increase competences of biomass professionals and help to further strengthen the overall competitiveness of this sector in the Republic of Moldova.", said Wicher Slagter, Head of Political and Economic Section of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova.

The plantations of energy willows and acacia will be looked after by the students of the vocational schools. So, they will get practical knowledge, as they are enrolled in a new educational module "Energy Plants – a Source of Renewable Energy" within the occupation of forester, introduced in the school curricula for the first time this year.

"For both our students and teachers this is the first experience of growing energy willow, representing green fuel that will heat the school cafeteria. We are glad to be one of the first institutions that train specialists in energy plants and so we will contribute to the development of this new sector in Moldova", said Sergiu Munteanu, director of the vocation school in Orhei.



When mature, the energy willow will be used to heat the school cafeteria. To be able to do that, the school in Orhei will receive a chipper and a biofuel production line which will turn the willow stems into fuel. The biofuel will be used for the new heating system expected to be installed at the vocational school, the total investments exceeding 100,000 Euro granted by the European Union under the Energy and Biomass Project.

“The pattern that will be piloted at the school in Orhei secures the energy autonomy for the institution. They have biomass on their own land and they will turn it into biofuel and use it to heat their premises. It is going to be an integral process, a closed cycle that will secure both appropriate skills for students, and savings for the school”, declared Valeriu Triboi, Deputy Minister of Economy.

The Energy and Biomass Project with the support of the Ministry of Education encouraged three Moldovan vocational schools to introduce new courses related to the biomass energy sector (“Energy Plants – a Source of Renewable Energy” in Orhei and Floresti and “Operators of Biomass Boilers” in Chisinau) in the 2015-2016 academic year and thereby to respond to the demand of new kind of professionals in the energy sector.

“There are many businessmen who would like to start this kind of business with energy plantations in Moldova, but they face lack of qualified professionals. The new course responds to the new market demand and supports the development of a new branch in the biomass energy sector”, told Vladimir Bragaru, owner of the first energy plantation in Moldova.

The energy willow is the most widespread kind of energy plant. It is also known as fast growing willow, because it grows about 3 cm per day and in 2 or 3 years it grows 6-7 meters high. Its stems are used to produce biofuel (briquettes, pellets) almost equal to coal in terms of calorific value. The energy willow is resistant to various weather conditions, grows on wetlands, sandy soil and soil with poor productivity. It is successfully used in the renewable energy industry, and also in the pharmaceutical industry as it contains salicin used to make aspirin.

The Energy and Biomass Project is a three-year EUR 9.41 million project granted by the European Union and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme during 2015-2017.



Images:

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