

Arizona biorubber research center farm construction complete



Bridgestone Americas Inc. in early October announced completion of their Agro Operations Guayule Research Farm in Eloy, Arizona. The research farm will supply guayule biomass for rubber production at the company's BioRubber Process Research Center, which is currently under construction in Mesa (see "In Pursuit of Homegrown Tires" in our July/August 2013 issue).

Bridgestone has restated their commitment to a healthy environment for current and future generations. "Because the demand for tires is expected to increase in the long term, we are investing in identifying ways not only to diversify our natural rubber source beyond the hevea rubber tree, but also to explore other innovative methods to make our products more sustainable. Guayule fits the profile perfectly, as it's both domestic and renew-

able," said Bill Niaura, director of new business development, adding that the completed Agro Operations site is a critical piece of the puzzle.

Agro Operations includes a dedicated 281-acre research farm, two greenhouses, an equipment storage building, and a main research and laboratory building—all now completed. Teams working on-site will research genetic improvement and optimized agronomic practices; will scale up seed availability for additional farming and biomass production; and will build relationships with independent producers.

The farm started growing guayule for research use in spring of 2013. The team has completed its fall planting, scheduled to provide its first output of biomass to the BioRubber Process Research Center for tire evaluation in mid-2015.

The center was designed by Tempe-based architects Hollon Design Associates LLC. Construction management was performed by BSI Construction LLC.

Bridgestone Group has established the usage of 100 percent sustainable materials as an initiative to make full use of the company's technological and product development capabilities. Accomplishing this will require progress specifically in the areas of expanding or diversifying renewable resources.

Through efforts such as guayule research, the Bridgestone Group aims to offer its customers high quality products on a perpetual basis—sustainable from both a business and an environmental standpoint. The project aligns with the Bridgestone Group's company-wide dedication to sustainability, known as One Team One Planet. ■

