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Companhia Vale do Rio Doce announces the inception of tests with biodiesel in the Vitoria - Minas Railway

Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD) announced today that it will begin to use a biodiesel fuel blend (20% biodiesel/80% diesel, known as B20) for its trains operating in the Estrada de Ferro Vitoria Minas (Vitoria Minas Railway), also known as EFVM. The new biodiesel fuel blend will be used starting this year, for an initial period of 6 months. The decision was announced in the opening session of the 8th International Heavy Haul Railway Conference and was made after tests conducted with the B20 fuel in two locomotives indicated positive results. The company also announced that it will begin to operate - in the 3rd quarter of 2006 -- the largest capacity train in Latin America. The new train will boast 312 cars, measure 3.2 kilometers long and weight 319 gross tons to meet the growing demand of the Estrada de Ferro Carajás (Carajas Railway - EFC), as compared to the existing two locomotives of 208 cars, and 2.3 kilometers long.

CVRD's tests with the B20 fuel exceeded the goals set by the Brazilian government, considering that its National Program for the Production and Use of Biofuel set the target of inserting 2% of the fuel by 2008. In order to make the program viable, still subject to the approval of the National Petroleum Agency (Agência Nacional do Petróleo - ANP), CVRD will build tanks in the cities of Tubarão (ES) and Nova Era (MG) so as to store the oil from soybean producers.

The expectations of CVRD - the largest diesel consumer in the country - with the biodiesel fuel go beyond the tests in the states of Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo as the company is contemplating the production of alternative fuel in farms in northern states such as Maranhão and Pará. "Biodiesel is not only of key importance as a future replacement for diesel, but also as an alternative to imported oil, addressing the inevitable decline in the world's oil reserves. CVRD also relies on biodiesel as a clean, renewable energy source. Another important issue in connection with biodiesel is that it will leverage the economy of poor regions in Brazil, as the fuel is produced from vegetable oils such as soybeans and the castor oil plant, which can be grown in semi-arid regions", added Mr. Eduardo Bartolomeo, Operating and Logistics Director for CVRD.

As for the largest capacity train in the Americas (and the second worldwide), it will be driven by three locomotives in a distributed power system. The project started from the growing demands of production in the Carajás mines. "Currently, the ten trains operating in Carajás have 208 cars and approximately 25 thousand tons. Today the production is around 70 million tons of iron ore but it will reach 100 million tons in the next few years. Productivity is growing at such rates that short-term solutions are warranted, as an alternative to the expansion of the railway network, for example," concluded Mr. Bartolomeo.

The 8th International Heavy Haul Railway Conference is the largest conference in the industry worldwide and is expected to welcome 6 thousand delegates (1.5 thousand from foreign countries). The event will take place simultaneously with the 2005 International Railway Fair (Feira Internacional de Railways) and the International Seminar on Rail Business (Seminário Internacional de Negócios Ferroviários). CVRD will host the meeting, with the support of trade associations such as the National Association of Railroad Transportation (Associação Nacional dos Transportadores Ferroviários - ANTF), the Brazilian Association of Railroad Industries (Associação Brasileira da Indústria Ferroviária - Abifer) and the Interstate Union of Railroads and Highways Industry Materials (Sindicato Interestadual da Indústria de Materiais e Equipamentos Ferroviários e Rodoviários - Simefre).

More information



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