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GenomeCanada

POPCAN: Genetic Improvement of Poplar Trees as a Canadian Bioenergy Feedstock

Status	Approved
Competition	2010 Large-Scale Applied Research Project Competition
Sector	Forestry/Environment
Genome Centre	Genome British Columbia
Project Leaders	Carl Douglas and Shawn Mansfield, University of British Columbia

Project Description

Clean energy from the poplar tree. While the Government of Canada has recently mandated a five percent renewable fuel content in gasoline, current production, which is almost exclusively derived from agricultural residues, is insufficient to produce the requisite volume. It will, therefore, be necessary to develop new feedstocks for biofuel production, the majority of which is expected to come from woody plants and trees. With funding from Genome Canada, scientists are studying the genetic underpinnings of tree growth as well as the traits associated with biofuel suitability in two species of poplar. Their overall aim is to develop short-rotation, fast-growing trees that can grow in a variety of climates across Canada with wood that can be more readily converted to biofuel while minimizing the ecological footprint. A social research component is working with scientists to examine the social and economic issues associated with establishing breeding programs for fast-rotation poplar plantations.