

## **5000 Farmers in Deal with Petro Firms**

Five thousand farmers in Maharashtra have signed up to cultivate jatropha, the new wonder plant for producing bio-fuel. They have been contracted to sell jatropha seeds to Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum and HPCL. The farmers can either sell the seed at Rs 5 per kg, which is 50 paise higher than the private contracted by the Chattisgarh government, or sell the extracted oil at Rs 25 per liter. Two centres have been designated for collecting jatropha oil- one at Vashi in Navi Mumbai and another in Loni near Pune. These centres will begin functioning from January 1, 2006.

Oil from jatropha seed is converted into non-toxic fuel and other products such as glycerol, which is further refined to obtain glycerin. The ministry of petroleum has laid down guidelines for the oil, which will be used as an input for producing diesel. Jatropha or jatropha Curcas, also known as Ratanjoyti and Bagrandi, is considered a wonder shrub, given its ability to absorb atmospheric carbon dioxide upto 50 per cent of the tree weight. It can also become an income generator in view of the carbon trading agreement. Under the Kyoto deal of 1997, organisations involved in reducing atmospheric carbon can indulge in carbon trading. India is sixth in the world in terms of energy demand accounting for 3.5 per cent of the world commercial energy consumption. The import of crude oil is expected to go up from 85 million tonne to 147 million tonne by 2007. Diesel consumption in the country is expected to rise at an annual rate of 5.6 per cent. In Europe and the US, blends between 5 and 20 per cent of bio-diesel are used as will without engine modification. In France, 5 per cent bio-diesel is mandatory.

*Source : Business Standards, December 2, 2005*