

How Notts farmers fuel a new demand



FUEL FOR THOUGHT: Phoenix Fuels production director Colin Bower with some rape seeds and the Green Dragon briquettes POSTPHOTO C240408ML3-7

A GROUP of Notts farmers are leading the way in the production and use of super-green biofuels.

Phoenix Fuels, in Rufford, is supplied with oilseed rape by eight farmers collectively known as Sherwood Produce, who also grow cereals and vegetables on farms in a 50-mile stretch from Nottingham to Doncaster.

The oilseed rape is crushed to squeeze out vegetable oil, which is used raw or converted into biodiesel to fuel the vehicles which transport Sherwood Produce's vegetables across the country.

The leftover vegetable matter from the crushing process is then made into briquettes – known as Green Dragon Fuel.

This is a “green” substitute for coal or wood which can be used on all wood burning appliances, open fires or stoves.

Each block will burn for up to three hours, meaning it saves the equivalent of six wooden logs, while producing twice as much heat.

Vegetable oil is also used to power the generator which packages the group's vegetables.

Colin Bower, director of Phoenix Fuels, said the fuel had fantastic green credentials because it provides

lower carbon vehicle fuel, lower carbon heating fuel and is locally produced as well as creating oxygen and absorbing carbon dioxide as it grows.

“Within the group we are producing organic vegetables, commercial cereal crops and biofuels as well,” he said.

“They have a symbiotic relationship with each other and aren't taking a huge amount of land out just for biofuels.

“Oilseed rape is in the arable rotation of a crop. The farmers grow a different crop on an annual rotation, so one year it might be wheat and the second year it could be oilseed rape.

“Some do it on a two-year cycle but it can be a seven-year cycle.”

Mr Bower said the farmers grew produce on a total of 16,000 acres of land. At any one time, about 7,000 acres of this would be growing vegetables and 9,000 acres would be growing wheat or oilseed rape.

Hammond Produce, of Redhill, Arnold, is a major shareholder in Phoenix Fuels and a member of Sherwood Produce.

It also runs the fleet of eight biofuel-run articulated lorries which transport Sherwood Produce's goods.

● For more details, log on to www.green-dragonfuel.co.uk.