

# Jatropha - A Greenergy perspective



Jatropha is a tree that can grow on low grade land and is therefore being promoted as an alternative biofuel feedstock to crops that require prime agricultural land. There are a number of conflicting opinions regarding how viable an option jatropha actually is on a large commercial scale.

## Summary

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Greenergy is a significant producer and supplier of petroleum and biofuels into the UK transport fuels market, supplying over 15% of the UK's overall petrol and diesel market and approximately one third of the biofuels market. The company has extensive worldwide sourcing experience, with manufacturing operations in the UK and a blending facility in Rotterdam from which we supply customers across Europe.

In this Perspective, Greenergy presents the following:

Jatropha is a relatively new biodiesel feedstock which is being promoted by some within the industry as a 'sustainable' alternative to other biodiesel feedstocks such as soy, palm and rape. However, there are a number of issues which need to be considered before large-scale commitments to jatropha are made:

- Commercial scale production of jatropha is relatively new, so it is currently undergoing a significant development stage to determine its productivity.
- Jatropha is a hardy plant which can survive and grow in marginal environments and particularly in arid areas. However, as with all plants it will give higher yields if grown on more fertile land so if demand increases there is significant potential for it to displace other crops on more fertile land.
- Jatropha is a tree that produces oil yielding seeds every 3 – 8 years over a period of up to 40 years. As such it is less flexible in terms of land use than the annual arable crops more commonly used for biodiesel production.
- The lack of reliable performance characteristics for jatropha seeds, along with no reliable production and harvesting data, means there is currently no assurance of yield.
- Unlike other biodiesel feedstocks such as rape oil or palm oil, the products of jatropha are poisonous to humans and animals. Therefore, existing vegetable oil supply chains cannot be used for jatropha oil which must be kept separate from all food-grade oils requiring new supply chains to be developed.

Once progress has been made on the above and jatropha oil becomes available on a commercial scale, Greenergy will consider incorporating it as part of its feedstock mix.