



Soy Foam Provides Comfort to the Furniture Industry



For consumers seeking new and innovative ways to go green, the soy-based furniture industry offers a variety of eco-friendly products including items like sofas, mattresses and recliners. The United Soybean Board (USB) and soybean checkoff supported the initial research on soy polyols resulting in the development of applications by industry such as furniture.

Producing soy-based furniture starts by creating polyols, which serve as one of the primary ingredients in the flexible foam that is found in the cushioning. Manufacturers used to rely on petroleum-based polyols when creating this flexible foam. In recent years, however, companies like Cargill are replacing these petrochemicals with soybean-based polyols.

Cargill's BiOH® polyols, the first of their kind to become available, are now equitable in quality to the petroleum-based polyols. These BiOH polyols yield consistent, high-quality foam and require less non-renewable energy, resulting in less global-warming emissions than petroleum-based polyols.

This foam was first tested by Hickory Springs, a supplier of furniture components, and one of Cargill's initial partners when Cargill first entered the global market for bio-based polyols.

"Hickory Springs helped us validate what the soy-based polyols could or could not do," says Yusuf Wazirzada, Business Unit Leader for Cargill's biobased polyurethanes business. "They had decades of experience in the furniture and bedding area—we gave them our product and they were able to help us get to where we are today."

Hickory Springs became the first slabstock foam manufacturer to commercialize flexible polyurethane foam made in part with soy-based polyols. A manufacturer of foam for nearly 50 years, Hickory Springs tested the BiOH soybean-based polyols in their flexible foam furniture components. The company has replaced up to 20 percent of the petroleum-based polyols traditionally used in flexible foam with soy-based polyols, creating a consistent flexible foam product with a creamier texture than petroleum-based furniture foams.

Cargill is continuing to invest in soy polyols, recently announcing a new polyols plant in Chicago to provide a greater supply of BiOH polyols for a variety of products.

To learn more about soy polyols and other soy new uses visit www.soynewuses.org

For more information on Hickory Springs visit www.hickorysprings.com