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SAAB ANNOUNCES UK LAUNCH OF 9-5 BIOPOWER FLEX-FUEL MODELS



Today, Thursday 10th November, Saab Great Britain announces that it will now take orders for the Saab 9-5 BioPower™, a flex-fuel car whose fossil CO2 emission level can be reduced by as much as 70 per cent compared to a standard petrol-engined car. Saab BioPower technology means that the 9-5 model is capable of running on either a high-blend mixture of eco-friendly renewable energy source bioethanol and petrol (E85), or on pure petrol, without any adjustment required by the driver.

Initially available with the 2.0t, 2-litre light-pressure turbo engine, UK prices for the Saab 9-5 BioPower begin at £21,651 on the road for the Saloon, and £22,851 for the Estate variant. A manual transmission will be available from launch, with an automatic variant to follow shortly after. First UK deliveries will commence in January 2006. The BioPower engine will be available in all 9-5 2.0t model 'forms'; Linear, Linear Sport, Vector and Vector Sport, with a £600 price differential over the regular petrol models.

As its name suggests, the Saab 9-5 BioPower not only offers purer power, but more of it. Because Saab's turbocharging technology and engine management systems make it possible to take advantage of bioethanol's higher octane rating, an impressive 20 per cent gain in brake horse power (bhp) and 16 per cent growth in torque can be enjoyed when the car runs on E85 compared to when running on regular petrol.

Bioethanol - Renewable and Sustainable

Bioethanol is produced from a wide variety of biomass, including forest residue, sugar cane and sugar beet, making it a totally renewable and sustainable fuel source. When mixed in high volumes with low volumes of petrol, a potent yet environmentally-friendly fuel, known as E85, is created. Unlike petrol and diesel, the consumption of E85 does not significantly raise atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide (CO2), which is the greenhouse gas that, according to some scientific research, contributes to global warming. This is because the emissions that are released from the combustion of bioethanol whilst driving are cancelled out by the amount of CO2 that is removed from the atmosphere, through the natural photosynthesis process, when the crops for conversion to bioethanol are grown.



Biofuels - A Key Part of General Motors' Global Vehicle Fuels Initiative

When announcing the UK launch of Saab BioPower today, Elizabeth A Lowery, General Motors Vice President of Energy and the Environment, said that bioethanol plays a key part in GM's multi-pronged energy strategy. Speaking at the Department for Transport Environmentally Friendly Vehicles Conference in Birmingham, Ms Lowery noted that in its domestic market of the United States, General Motors already sells a total of nine flex-fuel vehicles capable of running on E85. With 1.5 million such GM vehicles already in use on US roads, as well as being the largest seller of the bioethanol vehicles in Brazil, General Motors is the largest manufacturer of flex fuel vehicles in the world.

"E85 is clean-burning, renewable and sustainable fuel," Lowery told the conference. "As in North America, the infrastructure here in Europe for E85 needs more investment, and more stations to bring bioethanol closer to everyone. But with the European Union's indicative targets for biofuel usage, fuel providers will be encouraged to expand the volume and the infrastructure to meet the needs of consumers, just as we are voluntarily expanding our offerings to meet their vehicle needs in line with the biofuel objective," she continued.

"Frustratingly, the E85 fuelling infrastructure is virtually non-existent in the UK today," adds Jonathan Nash, Managing Director of Saab Great Britain. "We urge the Government to take positive action in its pending Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation to actively encourage the widespread availability of E85 bioethanol throughout the UK."

A True Flex-Fuel Car

The beauty of the Saab BioPower is that it can run on E85 or petrol in any proportions, without any adjustment needed by the driver. "Our engine management system automatically adjusts for the blend of fuel so, if there is no bioethanol available, the customer can simply run on petrol at any time," says Kjell ac Bergström, President and CEO of Saab Automobile Powertrain AB. "Turbocharged engines are particularly well-suited to exploiting the benefits of ethanol and our work with this engine indicates there is a great deal of development potential for this fuel."

Environmental Care with Sporty Performance

Because E85 has a much higher octane rating (104 RON) than petrol, this allows the timing of the engine's ignition to be advanced, producing more power without risk of harmful 'knocking'.

As a result, when running on E85, the Saab 9-5 2.0t BioPower engine delivers 180 bhp and 280 Nm of torque, compared to 150 bhp and 240 Nm when using regular petrol, which is a significant 20 per cent increase in maximum power and 16 per cent more torque. This gives even sportier performance. For the 9-5 BioPower Saloon, for example, the zero to 62 mph dash can be accomplished in 8.5 seconds, compared to 9.8 seconds when running only on petrol.



The only hardware modifications necessary are more durable valves and valve seats, and the use of bioethanol-compatible materials in the fuel system, including the tank, pump, lines and connectors.

A Swedish Success Story

The premium Swedish marque launched Saab BioPower in its domestic market in July 2005 to spectacular success. Since its launch, the BioPower derivative has accounted for around 80 per cent of Saab 9-5 sales, despite the fact that, currently, it is only available in manual transmission with one engine - the 2.0-litre light-pressure turbo. In fact, the Saab 9-5 BioPower is currently Sweden's best-selling environmentally-friendly vehicle (ELV), outselling sales of all of its competitor ELVs combined! Popular amongst fleet and retail customers alike, in the full year 2005, Saab expects to sell around 4,000 BioPower cars in Sweden.