

Motorists will soon have the luxury of choosing to fill their cars with either ethanol or petrol this year as negotiations between Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority (Mera) and ethanol producing companies to deliver the product in service stations are an advanced stage *Business News* has learnt.

Mera acting chief executive officer Elias Hausi said there will be no need for vehicle owners to change components in their cars for them to start using ethanol.

Motorists will soon start buying ethanol at service stations

Malawi currently has two ethanol producing companies?Ethanol Company (Ethco) based in Dwangwa and Presscane in Chikwawa.

?We have made great strides in experimenting the use of ethanol in vehicles. In fact, negotiations between us [Mera] and the ethanol producing companies are at a very advanced stage to enable the companies start delivering ethanol in service stations by the end of this year.

?This is a very good development because it will help us reduce the amount of fuel that we import; hence, saving on foreign exchange,? he said.

Hausi said vehicle owners will be required to buy a gadget that will be fitted in their cars for them to start using ethanol.

?For one to use ethanol, you do not need to have an engine that is specifically made to use ethanol. There is a special gadget, which will be in the country soon that vehicle owners will have to buy to fit into their cars for them to use ethanol,? he said.

Press cane general manager Christopher Guta confirmed in a separate interview that they are working hand in hand with Mera, but could not divulge more details because they are still working on a communication strategy for the same.

?This is a very important subject, but currently we cannot give you more information because we are still developing our communication strategy. We are one of the players in the whole value chain of producing ethanol and we are indeed working very closely with Mera,? he said.

Studies to determine the efficacy of Malawi vehicles to use ethanol have been ongoing for a number of years.

At one time, government facilitated the buying of a flexi-vehicle?a vehicle that uses both petrol and ethanol?from Brazil.

Experts argue that the usage of ethanol could lessen the fuel import bill, which takes up a huge chunk of the country?s foreign exchange.