2017 GROWTH ENERGY ISSUE BRIEF

Environmental Fact-Check

QUICK READ

The biofuel ethanol is a win for the environment.

A number of recent studies from 2016 highlight the fact that ethanol increasingly benefits our environment, whereas oil is only becoming more harmful for our environment.

America's biofuel industry is doing more with less. We're producing cleaner fuels using less land and less water. Biofuels are reducing greenhouse gases and cleaning the air for future generations. This is the future of clean energy.

Ethanol reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) released a peer-reviewed report examining the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions from corn-based ethanol. The report found that corn ethanol reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 43 percent compared to conventional gasoline today, would further reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2022, and has the potential to reduce emissions by as much as 76 percent.

According to the Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory in a peer-reviewed study, when emissions related to fertilizer and chemical production, diesel use on the farm, transportation of the corn, energy used by the ethanol plant, transportation of ethanol to the market, and land use change emission, are tallied corn ethanol on average reduces GHG emissions by 34 percent compared to gasoline.

Ethanol improves air quality & lowers emissions.

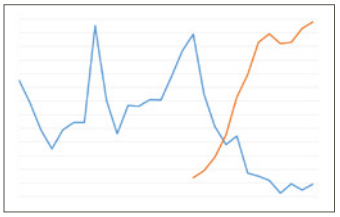
As an oxygenate, ethanol helps fuel burn more completely and efficiently, helping to lower carbon monoxide, particulate emissions (PM), as well as air toxics like benzene.

A review of real-world data over the last several decades shows significant decreases in emissions while ethanol blending has increased dramatically. Just in the last 15 years, ozone has decreased 17 percent while ethanol blending is above 10 percent, according to EPA data. Additional data from the University of Illinois-Chicago show substantial reductions in PM and benzene with the addition of ethanol.

EPA and USDA conclude ethanol has not contributed to farmland expansion.

According to EPA's Greenhouse Gas Inventory, there is no indication that native grassland has been converted to cropland since 2005, the year the RFS was enacted. Furthermore, ethanol production results in a coproduct (DDGs) that is used to feed livestock and reduce the amount of land used for feed.

In January 2017, the United States Department of Agriculture issued a study based on direct evidence from the past ten years, not projections, and found that between 2004 and 2012, at the same time U.S. corn ethanol production increased more than 200 percent, deforestation in Brazil's Amazon decreased from 10,200 to 2,400 square miles per year.



Comparison of Brazilian Deforestation (sq. km) and U.S. Corn Ethanol Production (billion gallons) by year.

Any recent reduction in U.S. acreage of Conservation Reserve Program land is the direct result of legislation – not ethanol production. The 2008 Farm Bill removed funding for roughly 7 million acres of CRP land. Based on this law, the number of enrolled acres has decreased to fit within the program's new, smaller budget. The 2014 Farm Bill additionally reduced the acreage of CRP land by another 8 million.

Wildlife habitat and native grassland are negatively impacted by fossil fuels.

The University of Montana found that the extraction and production of fossil fuels was responsible for destroying 7.4 million acres of vegetation from 2000 to 2013, and has severely jeopardized wildlife habitats. Surface mining is also responsible for the destruction of ecosystems and water pollution, harming fish and other wildlife.

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CHART SOURCES: Deforestation from the Brazilian National Institute of Space Research (INPE, 2014); U.S. corn ethanol production from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA, 2015)

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