



Food-and-Feed-versus-Fuel Issues

- There is little danger that biofuel production will impinge on food crop production, especially over the long run. Feedstocks for the current generation of biofuels consist primarily of varieties of corn and oilseeds that are not grown directly for human consumption. American agriculture's challenge is one of overproduction, which is why the United States has perennial crop surpluses.¹
- A study by the Department of Energy's National Oak Ridge Laboratory found that the United States could displace more than one-third of its current oil consumption with biofuels while continuing to meet demands for food, feed, and export.²
- Looking to the future, non-food crops and materials now considered waste will become the primary feedstocks for biofuel production. Ongoing and growing research will optimize cellulosic feedstocks, including energy crops such as switchgrass, hybrid poplars and other prairie grasses, and residues such as corn stalks, wheat straw, forest trimmings, sawdust, wood chips, yard waste, municipal solid waste and even animal wastes.³
- The United States could produce 40 billion gallons of ethanol a year – equivalent to 20 percent of current gasoline demand – from agricultural residues alone. And crops such as switchgrass can be planted on marginal land, reducing the need to use productive cropland or forests for energy crop production.⁴
- The use of agricultural products for energy is not likely to have more than a minor impact on retail food prices. Less than 5 percent of the cost of corn flakes or corn syrup, for example, stems from the price of corn. Energy costs associated with packaging, advertising and transportation represent a larger share of costs.⁵
- The production of ethanol yields a by-product called distillers grains that is a high-protein cattle feed and can replace corn for half of the animal's diet, and advancing technology is expected to make it a more useful substitute for pork and poultry.⁶
- The National Corn Growers Association says as much as 15 to 20 billion gallons of ethanol can come from corn without disrupting other markets; also, ongoing advances in technology increase corn yields will moderate corn price increases.⁷
- Evidence suggests new demand for biofuels can ease world hunger by attracting investment that supports agricultural improvements, which will benefit food production.⁸

For more on the impact of biofuels on food and feed, among other facts, go to <http://www.energyfuturecoalition.org/biofuels/>. For more on 25x'25, go to www.25x25.org.

REFERENCES

¹ Robert D. Perlack et al., "Biomass as Feedstock for a Bioenergy and Bioproducts Industry: The Technical Feasibility of a Billion-Ton Annual Supply," Oak Ridge National Laboratory, ORNL/TM-2005/66, Apr. 2005, p. 3 (http://feedstockreview.ornl.gov/pdf/billion_ton_vision.pdf).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John M. Urbanchuk, Director, LECG LLC, "The Relative Impact of Corn and Energy Prices in the Grocery Aisle," June 14, 2007, p. 5 (http://www.ethanolrfa.org/objects/documents/1157/food_price_analysis_-_urbanchuk.pdf)

⁶ National Corn Growers Association, "How Much Ethanol Can Come From Corn," May 24, 2006, (<http://www.ncga.com/ethanol/pdfs/2006/HowMuchEthanolCan%20ComeFromCorn.v.2.pdf>)

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Jason Clay, Center for American Progress, in "Introduction: A Global View," in *Resources for Global Growth: Agriculture, Energy and Trade in the 21st Century*, Center for American Progress, Washington, D.C., 2005, p. iv (<http://www.americanprogress.org/atf/RGGBOOK.PDF>).