

Ethanol: Beneficial or Worthless?

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The use of ethanol can seem like it is an excellent replacement for the traditional petrol, but if we took a closer look, we could see how the continuous use of ethanol affects prices and farming. Ethanol is not new when it comes to usage. It has been utilized for quite some time in the Midwestern states of agriculture like Minnesota and Iowa. For the past few years, ethanol usage has been a huge success in all states by offering the benefit of saving the planet from problems with energy or bringing forth jobs. It also tends to create various new companies that are based around a lot of farming. When doing all of this, ethanol seems like the perfect problem solver.

Everyone at some point or another has heard that corn ethanol is the most important factor to renewable energy. Based on the energy catastrophe that we currently face, of course everyone cannot help but to be hopeful. However, the hope that the country has can be quite short when one experiences the food prices in local grocery stores. That is only one of the negatives that using corn ethanol tends to cause that a lot of individuals are not fully aware of. In a quick way to promote the use of ethanol as friendly and environmentally safe, people seem to ignore that ethanol is consuming way more resources than it tends to save. Therefore, ethanol is not a sufficient replacement of gasoline and should be ceased from usage.

To fully go into depth about ethanol, one must know exactly what the term means. So what is ethanol exactly? Ethanol is considered an alcohol. It has recently been determined that it is a much cheaper and more environmentally safe fuel and energy source than regular gasoline. Ethanol is better thought of as ethyl or grain alcohol, which has been talked about in various media. A lot of individuals have declared ethanol as the fuel of the future that is eventually destined to replace gas. The major key to the future of ethanol will rely solely on

gasoline and oil prices. If they continue to remain high for an extended period of time, it will give the go for the investors to stand behind it as an alternative method for fuel. “Many investors have already started giving a lot of thought in investing in future projects that involve ethanol production” (Cocheo, 2006).

There are some pros to using this renewable source of energy. Ethanol is in heavy demand by many people in the United States because of its positive aspects, including the fact that it is a domestic resource. Ethanol is clean burning because it does not give off particles of pollution. Jonathon Winburg stated, “It actually can reduce carbon monoxide emissions as low as 30%. As a matter of fact, it is the cleanest burning fuel on the market today” (2008). It is said that ethanol can in fact be mixed with other biofuels in order to produce an even cleaner fuel for transportation. In addition to being featured in many processes of industrial use, ethanol is also available commercially to consumers for cooking fuel, heating, and many other uses. Lastly, since ethanol is handled here in the United States, that means that it creates more jobs, but are these pros worth the cons that ethanol produces as well?

Even though there is a high demand for ethanol, at the present it is growing at a rate that is faster than the supply can meet. In reference to price, natural gas is relatively inexpensive to produce, but to process ethanol can be quite energy inefficient and costly. It is said, “Areas where ethanol is produced people will save up to 20-30 percent each gallon but it becomes increasingly expensive in areas away from where ethanol is produced, for example on the coast. It is expected that on the West Coast people will pay 20 percent more for a gallon of ethanol than gasoline” (Wallace, 2006). Since this issue has in fact risen lately, the prices for gas have gone up at a much faster rate than what was predicted previously. It is quite

uneconomical to use corn to produce ethanol. It drives up the prices of food significantly. An article stated, "The price of corn per bushel has gone up to \$7.36 from the recent norm of around \$2" (Beedie, 2007). Ethanol uses approximately 30 percent more energy to make than it actually creates. Basically, ethanol production also causes soaring prices of food because of its uneconomical need to produce. This in turn impacts negatively to the environment.

In conclusion, there are many pros and cons to producing and using ethanol. The pros range from being clear burning to preventing pollution to creating new jobs for more individuals. However, there are cons to producing ethanol as well. The price of food grows rapidly with each phase of production, and ethanol can be quite energy inefficient. Although there is absolutely no way for a person to predict the future with actual confidence, increasing prices and costs for producing ethanol continue to grow rapidly. Ethanol is never going to be a problem solver for the entire world's increasing situations. That is one fact that is known for certain. It is true that biofuels can give a possibility of solving some of the problems of transportation, but unless the cost of production is decreased, it is just exchanging one problem for another. Therefore, the industry should stop producing ethanol because it only causes more problems than good.

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