

# Corn and Ethanol

Contributed by Administrator  
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The corn and ethanol debate may help farmers

The US government, have for some time now being giving a subsidy to corn and ethanol production. The reasoning behind helping in the production of corn and ethanol is that it can be used as a alternative to fossil fuels. In turn it is hoped that because ethanol burn more cleanly than petrol that it will help the environment and reduce US dependence on oil from other countries.

With most ethanol that is produced in the U.S being made from corn, although other grains and biomass can be used, there as been a economic stimulation to U.S. agriculture, therefore creating a new market for corn and maize. Estimates have also shown that as many as 10 million acres of land are required to grow corn or maize to produce ethanol.

By increasing production in the ethanol industry it may be a means of increasing farmers income as well as reducing farm subsidy payments and also as said before, lessen the dependence on imported fuels. Furthermore, there is more energy efficiency achieved through use of corn and ethanol and it also achieves a net gain in a better form of energy since converting corn to ethanol means using abundant domestic supplies of coal and natural gas.

Some possible negative aspects with using corn and ethanol:

There seems to be a problem around the facts and figures balancing in the corn and ethanol arena. Since its requires fuel usage in the first place to grow corn and 1 acre of corn will produce about 328 gallons of ethanol. However, the amount of fossil fuel needed to plant, grow and harvest this amount of corn is about 140 gallons which adds up to \$347 per acre. This in turn breaks down to one gallon of ethanol costing \$1.05, before the corn leaves the farm.

This may be further compounded by the crushing and fermentation of corn at processing plants, all of which consumes energy. It seems that the end cost of producing ethanol and using corn works out to be more expensive than that of petrol.

On a positive note there are a lot of people who state that figures show that corn and ethanol give up to thirty percent more energy than is taken to make it. Also some other figures show the net energy values for corn and ethanol are going up, and the reason for this is that technology relating to corn and ethanol production is getting better.