

The Buffalo News : Opinion

Friday, March 21, 2008

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Home-grown ethanol is better than imported oil

Updated: 03/21/08 6:51 AM

The accuracy of a recent letter criticizing ethanol ended after the writer noted that ethanol consumes corn and that corn prices rose in recent years.

In fact, ethanol demand accounts for only two dimes on a dollar of the corn price rise. Free-market forces, not the government, are driving farmers and the ethanol industry. With gasoline over \$3 a gallon and corn over \$5 a bushel, government subsidies no longer matter. Prices rose primarily because undervalued commodities attracted Wall Street and international speculators emboldened by the weak dollar.

Let's put some faith in the American farmer. Home-grown ethanol is a whole lot better — for local jobs, the national economy, the trade deficit, the price of gasoline, the level of pollution — than imported oil. By fall 2009, the RiverWright plant in Buffalo will be one of 200 producing about 12 billion gallons of ethanol annually, saving an equivalent amount of \$100-plus barrels of imported oil.

An expected doubling of per-acre corn productivity for ethanol in the next few years will mean using 15 percent of the corn crop would cut the 124 billion gallons of gas made from imported oil that we use each year by 10 percent. That's a savings of \$37.2 billion at \$3 a gallon, \$49.6 billion at \$4 a gallon.

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