



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 25, 2011

EPA Approves E15 Ethanol Mix

Despite the environmental and financial failure of federally subsidized ethanol, the Environmental Protection Agency has approved even greater use of the fuel additive. On Friday, the EPA approved the use of 15 percent-blend ethanol for cars and trucks produced in the year 2001 and later. The decision expands upon an October EPA decision which increased ethanol blends with unleaded gasoline from 10 to 15 percent.



The [Des Moines Register](#) explains:

The E15 decision was supposed to be made by mid-2010 but was delayed several times for more testing as automobile and small engine manufacturers raised various concerns and objections. Several lawsuits, including one by the automobile industry, already have been filed to block the EPA's earlier decision.

According to the [lawsuit](#), led by the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers and the Association of International Automobile Manufacturers, the National Marine Manufacturers Association, and the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, the decision violates the Clean Air Act because the EPA does not have the power to "approve applications for new fuels and fuel additives" for some vehicles and not others.

Regardless of the lawsuit, however, the EPA moved ahead with its approval of the E15, a decision that works in favor of the nation's corn industry. Nearly one-third of the corn produced in the nation is used to make ethanol — and that percentage is even higher in Iowa, with its large number of ethanol production plants.

Predictably, members of the ethanol industry and corn growers are delighted with the decision.

Darrin Ihnen, chairman of the National Corn Growers Association, observes that the announcement is "welcome news," adding, "We are pleased to see the EPA also realized what our industry has known for a long time; that the use of higher blends of ethanol in vehicles is safe."

Also celebrating the decision is Iowa's Senator Charles Grassley, who commented,

I've been frustrated with the amount of time it's taken the EPA to reach these decisions and I'd still like to see a waiver for E15 use in all vehicles, but I appreciate that the EPA Administrator has made certain to base the decisions on sound science.

While the decision may have a positive impact on the ethanol industry and corn farmers, it wholly ignores the failure of ethanol. On January 15, the [Daily Bulletin](#) reported, "Government subsidies for corn-based ethanol, which drive up the demand for the corn used in feed, are to blame for the price



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hikes [of livestock feed].”

As livestock feeders have already witnessed a rise in the cost of feed corn from less than \$4 a bushel to \$6.50 in just one year, Chad Hart, agricultural economist at Iowa State University, notes, “Livestock feeders had a good year in 2010, but things will be more difficult for them in 2011 because of the higher feed costs.”

Likewise, the [Competitive Enterprise Institute](#) indicates that the American taxpayers have “wasted a lot of money on ethanol subsidies and mandates while generating few environmental benefits.”

The environmental group Friends of the Earth noted these issues when it called the EPA’s decision “a New Year’s gift to corporate ethanol interests that is bad for consumers and bad for the environment.”

For these reasons, a number of organizations across the political spectrum began a [letter-writing campaign](#) last year that encouraged the government to allow the expiration of ethanol subsidies.

Nevertheless, ethanol has been heavily favored by the federal government. The *Des Moines Register* observes,

Ethanol is boosted by other government policies, such as a stair-step requirement that ultimately 36 billion gallons of gasoline sold in the U.S. must come from biofuels. The EPA also mandates special blends for use in large urban areas during summer to lessen thermal inversions, and ethanol currently is the only such non-fossil fuel additive.

Monte Shaw, executive secretary of the Iowa Renewable Fuels Association, adds that the E15 “will put the higher blend in about 65 percent of the gas tank capacity in the U.S.”



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