

Title:

Ethanol Touted as Innovative Solution to Today's Rising Gas Prices

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Summary:

As gas prices continue to surge higher and higher and concern over our country's reliance on foreign oil grows more serious by the day, many experts are pointing to ethanol as a quick and easy solution to the current energy crisis. This article takes a look at Ethanol as the new source of gas and the opportunities it presents.

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As gas prices continue to surge higher and higher and concern over our country's reliance on foreign oil grows more serious by the day, many experts are pointing to ethanol as a quick and easy solution to the current energy crisis.

What is ethanol? Ethanol is a clean-burning, high-octane fuel made from plants, often corn, that many claim will be safer for the environment as well as reduce our reliance on oil from the Middle East.

This is Not Your Father's Ethanol ...

While ethanol first gained minor notoriety as a "fad fuel" that was introduced in the 1970s but never really caught on, the ethanol industry has made numerous innovations and improvements to the ethanol production process as well as the final product over the years and now expects to produce over 5 billion gallons of ethanol this year alone.

Of the ethanol that is produced, much is used to boost the octane rating of gasoline. Premium gasoline is made by adding ethanol to the gasoline mixture. The two most common blends are:

1. E10 - 10% ethanol and 90% unleaded gasoline. E10 is approved for use in any

make or model of vehicle sold in the U.S. Many automakers recommend its use because of its high performance, clean-burning characteristics. In 2004, about one-third of America's gasoline was blended with ethanol, most in this 10% variety.

2. E85 - 85% ethanol and 15% unleaded gasoline. E85 is an alternative fuel for use in flexible fuel vehicles (FFVs). There are currently more than 4 million FFVs on America's roads today, and automakers are rolling out more each year.

Adding ethanol to gasoline is beneficial because it not only decreases the fuel's cost, increases the fuel's octane rating and decreases gasoline's harmful emissions but it also, according to a recent study, lets drivers travel farther for less money.

At current market prices, \$20 worth of ethanol-blended fuel allows a vehicle to travel up to 15 miles farther than on gas without ethanol, according to a pilot study conducted by the American Coalition for Ethanol (ACE), a national trade association for the ethanol industry headquartered in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. "On a twenty dollar bill, drivers who choose ethanol-blended fuel will travel miles farther on less money than those burning straight gasoline," Ron Lamberty, Vice President of Market Development for ACE said in a press release about the study. "Not only is ethanol's cost-per-mile lower than regular gasoline, the blending economics of ethanol translate to lower prices at the pump for consumers."

Prices for E10 around the Midwest are as much as 10 cents less per gallon than regular unleaded, the ACE press release indicated. A recent Consumer Federation of America study shows that blending low-cost ethanol with high-priced gasoline can bring down prices at the pump by up to 8 cents per gallon.

The Next Step ...

With results like those mentioned above and with new innovations continuing to be rapidly introduced in the ethanol production process, it's little wonder that many fuel experts are now beginning to talk about shifting from ethanol as a fuel additive to ethanol as a replacement for petroleum-based fuel.

According to these experts, such a switch could allow us to break free from our addiction to foreign oil, could slash gas prices at the pump, could strengthen our national security, could produce jobs to rural America instead of the Middle East - all while protecting our environment.

To see an example of the benefits of increased reliance on ethanol, Americans

have to look no further than nearby neighbor Brazil, which has been committed to using ethanol for 30 years.

In Brazil, cars can run on gas or ethanol thanks to "flex-fuel cars." Drivers can simply choose between the two types of fuel or a mixture of both each time they pull up to the pump.

How far is America away from offering drivers here this same luxury? Many of the flex-fuel cars that triggered the ethanol boom in Brazil were made by GM and Ford and cars with the same technology were first introduced here in the U.S. three years ago. In fact, already three of every four new cars sold in the U.S. have the flex-fuel technology.

Maybe that's why in a recent speech, President Bush felt compelled to say, "Ethanol will replace gasoline consumption. Ethanol is good for the whole country."