

# Farm Talk

Jerry Webb

Farmers aren't waiting for the nation's leaders to agree on a fuel policy. They have the basic ingredients for producing an important fuel and they're moving ahead in that direction. And while the fuel experts debate the merits of alcohol and other non-petroleum fuels, many farmers are already producing it and the free enterprise system is working hard to get small alcohol-producing units on to the market.

Farmers know that the alcohol that's now being used in gasohol comes from farm crops and they rightly reason that since they're the ultimate source of this important fuel, why not shorten the process that turns their grain into alcohol, that is added to fuel and then sold back to them as gasohol. So they're experimenting with on-farm alcohol production and dozens of enterprising companies are working around the clock in a frantic race to be the first on the market with factory made stills designed to make farmers self-sufficient for fuel.

Granted, an alcohol still isn't going to produce diesel oil, but not all farmers burn diesel oil all the time and maybe in the future the move would be away from diesel powered equipment and toward machines that could run on pure alcohol, gasohol, or some other mix.

Some farmers and some researchers and some businesses have the technology to turn farm products into fuel that will run internal combustion engines and that's an important first step in this whole energy saving process. It's more than just experimenting, although a lot of that is still being done. A Michigan firm, for example, already has a go-anywhere portable still that will produce 20 gallons of 192-proof alcohol per hour from shelled corn or other grain. The company, R.B. Industries, claims to be producing alcohol for less than 15 cents a gallon. Company president William Kanitz says he's already turned down a sizable offer from a major company that wants to buy out his operation. But he thinks that buying out would amount to a closing down of an important fuel-producing process. So he's opted to stay in business and see what the market holds for his firm.

The R.B. Industries portable stills are selling for \$15,000 each and already the company has all the orders it can handle.

Another firm, Alternative Energy Limited, of Colby, Kansas, has pilot models in production and is taking orders for stills that cost as much as \$25,000 each. That company is promising delivery within eight to ten weeks of ordering. It plans to

market two basic models of on-farm stills—one that produces 200 gallons of alcohol a day from shelled corn and another called a bio-mass gasifier, that produces a mixture of gasses generated from shelled corn and other grain, wood chips, crop residues, coal, or virtually anything that will burn.

And yet another company, Sludge Express of Sheldon, Iowa, is offering a still patterned after a research model developed at South Dakota State University. Its engineers are still making refinements, but they plan to be on the market before the end of the year.

Hundreds of corn and small grain farmers, primarily in the midwest, are doing their own experimenting with home built stills. And the interest among farmers is running high. One innovative farmer, who has a working still already in operation, reports having to charge \$100 a visit just to hold down the traffic at his farm.

Another group, the Great Northern Equipment Company of Springfield, Illinois, is developing a 30-gallon-per-hour ethanol plant for converting shelled corn into alcohol. It's designed for individual farms, but is not quite ready for the market, according to a company spokesman.

And yet another development in the fuel-

alcohol business—the National Alcohol Fuel Production Association has been formed and has as its primary purpose to help those interested in this new energy source to make the best decisions. An association spokesman says, "We're encouraging farmers interested in on-the-farm production of alcohol fuel to attend workshops where they can get in-depth information and the latest technology."

So while the opponents of gasohol argue that it takes more energy to produce than its worth, and conservationists worry about the impact of farm fuel production on the nation's conservation plans, and while consumers worry about their food supply, some people are going ahead with the production of alcohol fuel. Some farmers aren't waiting until the final verdict is in. They're experimenting with the process and some are actually producing alcohol that is being used a farm fuel. Where that will take them eventually remains to be seen but it's a pretty sure bet that farm-produced alcohol is going to become an increasingly important source of farm fuel. In fact, it's destined to be more important as a fuel source for all of us and the impact that will have on American agriculture could be staggering.

## Sugar import fees reduced again

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland announced recently that import fees on sugar will be reduced to zero on raw sugar and .52 cent per pound on refined sugar.

Bergland said the reduction, the second in a week, was the result of a further rise in world sugar prices.

The new fees become effective the day after the

filing of a notice of the change with the Federal Register, which must be done by close of business Wednesday, Oct. 24.

The fees, which are set under a flexible import fee system based on world sugar prices, had been reduced last week to .76 cent per pound on raw sugar and 1.28 cents per pound for refined.

The new fees are based on average prices during Oct. 8-19.

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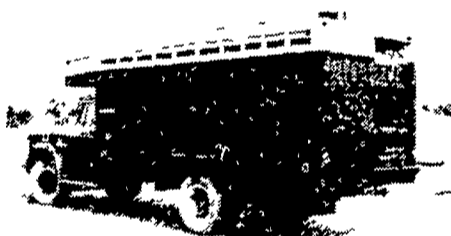
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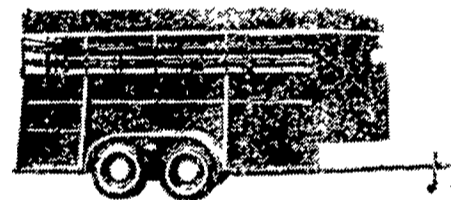
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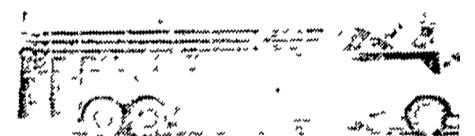
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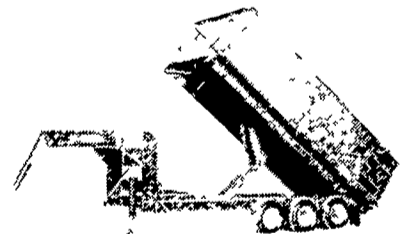
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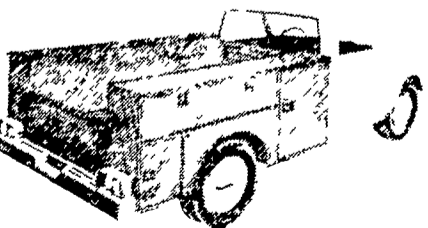
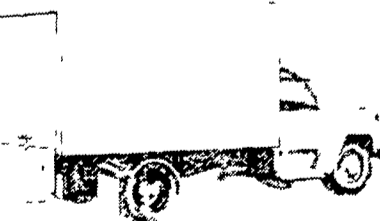
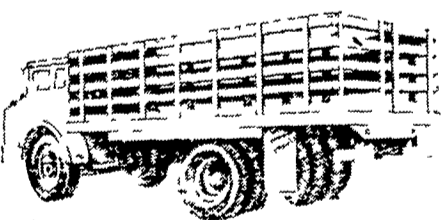
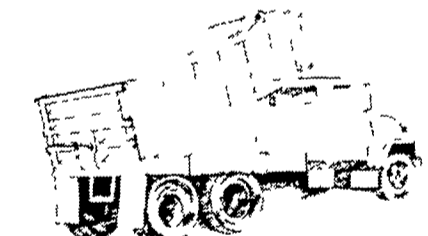
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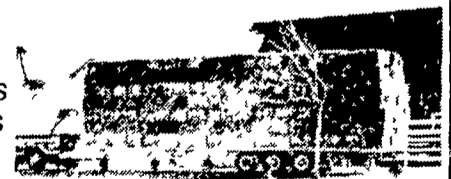


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