

Ethanol: America's Fuel For The 21st Century

By Leland Swenson
President,
National Farmers Union
Skyrocketing prices for propane and their oil-based heating fuels have gotten the attention of the American public. As a nation we spend millions, if not billions, of federal tax dollars each year assuring access to imported oil for a handful of multi-national cor-

porations. Nonetheless, as the 105th Congress reconvenes, Rep. Bill Archer, R-Texas, who chairs the powerful House Ways & Means Committee, is calling for the elimination of the federal excise tax exemption and the blenders tax incentive on reformulated fuels, such as ethanol blended fuels. In addition, many state legislators are talking about the elimination or

reduction of state excise tax exemptions on reformulated fuels.

National Farmers Union supports expansion of current national energy programs that have improved air quality in U.S. cities, provided economic opportunities and reduced U.S. dependence on foreign oil. American consumers also recognize the social, environmen-

tal and economic value of renewable fuels and are committed to encouraging the development and use of renewable fuels with tax dollars.

In a poll conducted following the November 1996 elections by the Republican polling firm, Research/Strategy/Management, Inc., 82 percent of Americans said they prefer directing current federal tax policies to encourage the use of domestically produced renewable fuels. In fact, 71 percent said they support continuing the federal 5.4 cent-per-gallon excise tax exemption for ethanol-blended fuels. The overwhelming support of U.S. renewable fuels policy varied little among Republicans, Democrats and Independents.

part in reducing pollution in the nation's major cities. The 1996 fiscal year annual report of the Environmental Protection Agency recognized the Reformulated Gasoline Program as a major element in improving the nation's air quality. The EPA report showed significant reductions in concentration of a number of toxic air pollutants. Benzene was reduced approximately 38 percent between 1994 and 1995. Carbon monoxide fell by 15 percent, and volatile organic compounds were reduced by 15 percent. With results like these, it is clear why three in four Americans say they are willing to continue tax incentives to ethanol blenders.

Ethanol production creates

Ethanol has played a major

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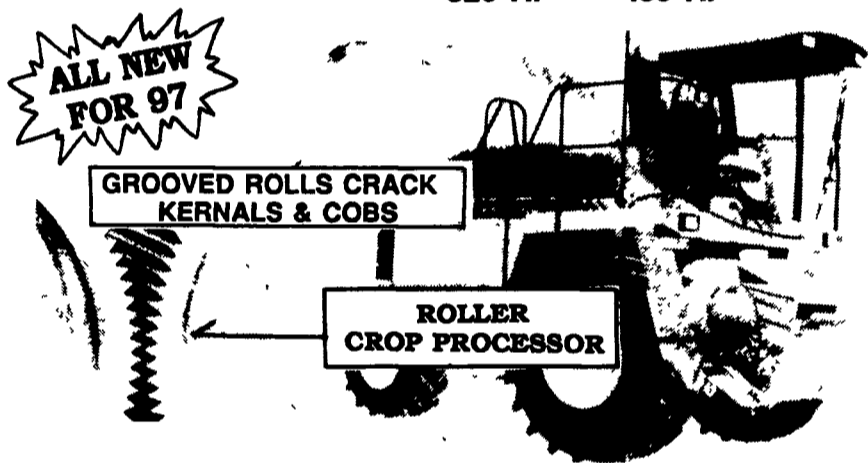
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