



Iowa Renewable Fuels Association

PRESS RELEASE

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AP Ethanol Hit Piece Inaccurate, Misleading

AP Misled People of Wayne County, Now Misleading the Nation

JOHNSTON, IOWA – The Iowa Renewable Fuels Association (IRFA) responded harshly to the Associated Press (AP) story smearing ethanol that was published in news outlets around the nation today. In its premeditated hit piece on ethanol, the AP blatantly ignored some very basic facts that would undermine their one-sided story.

“The AP simply ignored the facts in favor of its predetermined narrative,” stated IRFA Executive Director Monte Shaw. “The AP narrative that the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) and ethanol has led to super high corn prices, which in turn led to bad farming practices and environmental degradation simply doesn’t hold up to scrutiny. Unlike this AP story would have you believe, the vast majority of Iowa’s farmers are incredible stewards of the land and work to improve every year. Isolated reports of poor environmental practices should not divert attention from the overall positive land stewardship being implemented by Iowa’s farmers today.”

Shaw added: “Not only do the Wayne County residents quoted in the story feel misled, a simple review of the facts shows the AP went out of their way to slant this story so it was in-line with their hidden, predetermined anti-ethanol agenda.”

The Facts – Corn Prices

The AP attempted to portray the temporary drought-induced high corn prices as the new normal and the result of the RFS. Yet, on December 19, 2007 when then-President George W. Bush signed RFS2 into law the price of corn was \$4.34, and last night the price of corn closed at \$4.34 – the exact same price.

Wayne County Supervisor Bill Alley, quoted by the AP in the story, told the IRFA: “Another thing in this article that I really strongly disagree is the price of corn...There’s a lot of factors that causes the price of grain to go up or down...If you have a drought year, why, you just take ethanol aside and forget ethanol even exists, your crop is going to go up quite extensively...To me, this article is just directly hitting ethanol...there’s a lot more factors that affects the price of corn than ethanol itself.”

Recognizing how far corn prices have dropped this year, Wayne County farmer and retired Methodist pastor Leroy Perkins added: “What I don’t want to see is that corn prices go down to the point where we have the ‘80s return. Because if we have the ‘80s return, that’s bad for the whole country. It’s terrible for southern Iowa, because we are a farming area community.”

The Facts – Corn Acres

The AP article claims farmers “rushed to find new places to plant corn” and that Wayne County “now bears little resemblance to the rolling cow pastures” of previous years. Yet, a quick check of the USDA databases would show that Wayne County farmers planted 88,000 acres of corn in 1985 (before the ethanol boom), and only planted 58,500 acres of corn in 2012 (the most recent data available). According to statewide USDA data, Iowans have consistently planted fewer acres to all crops during the ethanol boom than before the first dry mill ethanol plant began operations in 2001.

Alley noted: “There’s areas that we need to get better...But is it significant, as a county as a whole? No, probably not. They’re not going down here to Madison Creek and clearing 2,000 acres flat.”

The Facts -- Land Stewardship

The AP story paints a picture of farmers disregarding the land in pursuit of more bushels of corn. Yet, according to USDA data there were more Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres in Iowa in 2012 than before the first dry-mill ethanol plant began operations in Iowa.

If the AP reporters had been upfront and asked Perkins what he thought of ethanol’s impact on Wayne County environmental practices, he would have told them: “I think it’s been wonderful. I don’t have a problem with that, because the average farmer’s going to take care of his farm. The ones that don’t, and you’ve got a percentage, not a large percentage, but you have a percentage that aren’t going to. They won’t do it regardless of what the price was, what it is. They’re going to do what they’re going to do, and that’s the way it’s going to be. Because of the extra income, [the average farmer is] going to take care of their land. They’re going to have the conservation, and I’ve seen an awful lot.”

The Facts – “Pristine Prairie”

On the lighter side, the AP story at one point claims Wayne County is losing “pristine prairie” to the plow because of ethanol. Alley stated: “We’re not plowing under pristine prairies...that’s back in the buffalo days...So that was probably an overstatement, or fabrication, maybe I should say.”

With a chuckle, Perkins added: “I didn’t know we had any pristine prairie. That was a

new one on me.”

The Facts – Misleading Intent

Not surprisingly, given the number of issues that the AP misrepresented in the story, the Wayne County farmers quoted by AP felt misled.

Wayne County Supervisor Bill Alley told IRFA: “They went a different direction than we [were] led to believe they were going in... To me as I read through this, it was a personal attack on ethanol... Some oil company got a hold of these people and said, you know, let’s hammer ethanol.”

Wayne County farmer and retired Methodist minister Leroy Perkins stated: “My understanding was they were going to touch on the water issues with our Rathbun Lake watershed, but they were leaning more in Wayne County to the absentee landlords that are out of state... Not once was I led to believe they were going to do a wham-bang on ethanol... And so as I read this, I’m wondering, I’m looking at it saying, where are the oil companies in this?”

For Renewable Fuels Association’s (RFA) fact check of the AP story, please [click here](#).
For Fuels America’s fact check of the AP story, please [click here](#).

Iowa is the leader in renewable fuels production. Iowa has 42 ethanol refineries capable of producing over 3.8 billion gallons annually, with three cellulosic ethanol facilities currently under construction. In addition, Iowa has 12 biodiesel facilities with the capacity to produce nearly 315 million gallons annually.

The Iowa Renewable Fuels Association was formed in 2002 to represent the state’s liquid renewable fuels industry. The trade group fosters the development and growth of the renewable fuels industry in Iowa through education, promotion, legislation and infrastructure development.

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For more information, visit the Iowa Renewable Fuels Association website at: www.IowaRFA.org