

Cows, Cars, and the Ethanol Con

23th November 2010

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<http://carbon-sense.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/cows-cars-and-ethanol.pdf>

Why are emissions from cattle eating grain classed as bad whereas emissions from cars burning grain ethanol are good?

Grain Fed Cows and Cars

My car operates on ethanol made from corn. My car produces CO₂ but it is "ethanol CO₂" so that's OK. The ethanol production is subsidised by the government.

I have a cow. I feed it corn. But now I will have to pay tax on the CO₂/methane the cow produces from the corn.

Why are cows discriminated against?

Consider a paddock of corn. Most of the carbon in the growing plant comes from carbon dioxide in the air and is converted to plant material using solar energy via the magic of photosynthesis. Some comes from the atmosphere via microbes in the soil.

This plant material, either biomass or grain, can be fed to cattle or made into ethanol for motor fuel.

Both cattle and cars then use an internal digestion/combustion process to extract the energy stored in the plant material.

Both processes produce gaseous emissions.

In cars, virtually every atom of carbon in the ethanol burnt produces one molecule of carbon dioxide. In cattle, some of the plant's carbon is stored for a while in flesh and bones, and the rest is emitted as the natural gases carbon dioxide and methane. This methane is soon oxidised in the atmosphere to produce carbon dioxide. (Methane levels in the atmosphere have been stable for 15 years or so. Most of it is produced by rotting vegetation, or comes from leaks from coal mining, natural gas operations or gas pipelines.)

Over the life of a car or a cow, they both produce the same carbon emissions. Every atom of carbon extracted from the air by the green plant eventually returns to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide, the plant food. This is the cycle of life.

It is therefore scientific incompetence or deliberate fraud by government climate alarmists to claim that consuming ethanol in cars is good and should be subsidised but consuming the same plant material in cows must be rationed and taxed.

We are told that ethanol uses renewable energy. Closer inspection shows it ties up a lot of good cropping land and uses a lot of fossil energy to plant, harvest and transport the grain and then a lot more energy to ferment it, distil it and then distribute it widely to make up its mandated proportion of motor spirit. A zero sum game at best.

An ethanol industry propped up by subsidies and mandates is not sustainable. This industry damages taxpayers and pushes up the cost of grains, beef, pork, eggs, milk and cereals.



Should Cars Guzzle Corn?

Subsidising ethanol brings no environmental benefits and is the enemy of the poor and hungry of the world.

It is time to end the ethanol con.

No more forcing motorists to buy it. No more tax breaks for construction of ethanol plants. No more subsidies or special protection for ethanol speculators. Let ethanol production compete fairly with all other sources of transport energy.

And no more slander of the livestock industry which, when all is considered, is greener than the ethanol industry.

Authorised by:

Viv Forbes

Chairman, The Carbon Sense Coalition

Rosevale, Qld, Australia

Phone 07 5464 0533

Email: Info@carbon-sense.com

www.carbon-sense.com

PS All Sheep are also Green.

See: <http://www.damaras.com/newsletters/200805.pdf>

The Unlikely Coalition:

Can you imagine an issue on which Greens, Rational Economists, FeedLot Operators, Global Warming Sceptics, Consumer Advocates and Tax Reformers agree? No? See this article on Ethanol Subsidies:

<http://reason.com/archives/2010/11/16/congress-let-ethanol-subsidies/print>

Even Al Gore has woken up to the Ethanol Con - can Gillard and the Greens be far behind?

<http://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews/idAFLDE6AL0YT20101122?sp=true>

http://www.science20.com/science_20/blog/al_gore_accepts_science_last_corn_ethanol_was_not_good_policy

Quick Comment from a Reader:

Hi Viv

Your wisdom is profound.

Every plant eventually approaches carbon neutral unless its carbon is locked up in furniture or buildings or books or ivory or (maybe best of all) pit props. It makes no difference whether the plant is processed through a herbivore, a fire or an ethanol distillery.

There is a danger that those plants which decay into the soil may actually reduce atmospheric carbon.

If my sensors are correct, Brisbane is experiencing the coldest November since records were first kept in BC40000. This is a serious worry as it could be the harbinger of dangerous global cooling.

In order to maintain and preferably increase atmospheric carbon dioxide, perhaps we should mandate a requirement for coal and oil burning especially on Earth Day.

Kindest regards

Michael Darby

More Good News:

Canadian Senators have voted down "The Climate Change Accountability Act" a stupid bill that called for Canadian greenhouse gases to be cut 25 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020.

(I think these target figures are generated by a huge random number generator run on a supercomputer).

See: <http://www.cbc.ca/politics/story/2010/11/17/senate-climate-bill.html>

"Carbon Sense" is a newsletter produced by the Carbon Sense Coalition, an Australian based organisation which opposes waste of resources, opposes pollution, and promotes the rational and sustainable use of carbon energy and carbon food.

Please spread "Carbon Sense" around.

For more information visit our web site at www.carbon-sense.com

Literary, financial or other contributions to help our cause are welcomed.

Viv Forbes MS 23, Rosewood Qld 4340 Australia. info@carbon-sense.com

07 5464 0533

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