

Corn-growers' impending challenge

Iowa farmers are resilient. They ride the highs and lows of corn and soybean markets every year, but a bleak future may be on the horizon. Imagine if over half of the market for Iowa-grown corn were to disappear.

Between the pandemic, small-refinery waivers, and the emergence of electric vehicles, ethanol producers have encountered an uphill battle. Unless we take deliberate action to make ethanol more viable in the future, an industry that consumes 53% of Iowa's corn crop could suffer greatly.

Aside from creating a cleaner-burning fuel, ethanol plants produce dried distiller grains to feed our nation's livestock. Manure from livestock is used to fertilize Iowa corn and so goes the sustainable cycle of American agriculture. Should we abandon the use of ethanol, we would surely disrupt a supply chain with wide-reaching implications for employment and our GDP. The ethanol industry alone supports 340,000 jobs and contributes \$43 billion to the national GDP.

As a county supervisor, I keep a close eye on the trends that affect rural Iowans, landowners, and corn growers. So often, the concerns of one group are shared among the others. I'm afraid if we fail to recognize the importance of the ethanol industry, and the challenges it faces, corn growers will lose a critical portion of their income. As agriculture suffers, so will our entire state.

As American consumers move toward low-carbon fuels, the solution for ethanol may exist in sustainability efforts. While already cleaner than traditional gasoline, several ethanol plants around the Midwest have made commitments to reduce their carbon footprints and gain access to low-carbon fuel markets. Some states, including Oregon, Washington, and Colorado, will pay a premium for low-carbon fuel.

The Midwest Carbon Express, a project designed by Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions, is an opportunity to reduce carbon emissions and allow ethanol producers to access the highly profitable markets. Through partnerships with 31 ethanol producers, Midwest Carbon Express plans to capture carbon emitted from the plants, sequester it safely underground in North Dakota, and make ethanol a net-zero fuel by 2030. If our local ethanol plants can be more profitable, farmers in Iowa will have a secure, long-term market for their corn.

The project's developer, Summit Carbon Solutions, is rooted in agriculture and understands the needs and concerns of farming operations all over the state and region. Unlike other large infrastructure projects we've encountered in the past, Summit Carbon Solutions is Iowa-based, and its parent company, Summit Agriculture Group, farms land along the route. Summit has shown a genuine interest in forming mutually beneficial partnerships with participating landowners, offering compensation in addition to the agricultural boost that everyone stands to enjoy. I'm confident Summit Carbon Solutions is the right organization to take on such a necessary endeavor.

It's pretty simple. Whether or not you farm or live in an agricultural community, this project poses significant benefits to our local, state, and national economies. Please join me in supporting Iowa farmers, the ethanol industry, and the Midwest Carbon Express project.