

Ethanol feed could produce 50 billion quarter-pounders, RFA report says

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(May 10, 2011) Washington – Fuel and feed are at the heart of American ethanol production today. As one of the largest feed producing segments in the US, the ethanol industry is providing increasing volumes of highly nutritious livestock feed for domestic and international markets alike, according to a [new analysis](#) from the Renewable Fuels Association (RFA) entitled “Fueling a Nation; Feeding the World.”

Too often, discussions of the ethanol industry’s impact on global grain use forget to recognize the fact that the grain ethanol process results in renewable fuel and highly nutritious animal feed. In modern ethanol production processes, one-third of every bushel of corn used is returned to the livestock feed market. Ethanol production requires only the starch portion of a corn kernel. The remaining protein, fat, fiber, and other nutrients are returned to livestock feeders.

According to the RFA report, America’s ethanol producers supplied nearly 35 million metric tons (mmt) of livestock feed in the 2009/2010 marketing year (the agricultural marketing year is from September 1 to August 31 of the following year). By volume, such production is greater than the total amount of grain consumed by all of the beef cattle in the nation’s feedlots.

For the current 2010/2011 marketing year, feed production from the ethanol industry is projected at 39 mmt. By way of comparison:

- if the 39 mmt of livestock feed was a country’s corn crop, it would represent the 4th largest crop in the world
- 39 mmt of livestock feed would be enough feed to produce 50 billion quarter-pound hamburgers – seven patties for each person on the planet
- 39 mmt of livestock feed would be enough to produce one chicken breast for every American every day for a year

American feed production by ethanol plants is also a growing portion of global livestock diets. Nearly 25 percent, or 9 mmt, of the distillers grains produced in 2010 was exported, with the leading recipients being China, Mexico, and Canada.

Livestock feed production at American ethanol biorefineries is broken down into a number of products depending upon the process used to produce ethanol. The vast majority of this feed is called distillers grains. Distillers grains come in various forms but make up more than 90 percent of the product produced. Other segments of the market include corn gluten feed and corn gluten meal.

While the more than 13 billion gallons of ethanol produced by US ethanol biorefineries each year remains the largest revenue generator for the industry, livestock feed production represented nearly \$4 billion in income in 2010 and that figure is likely to nearly double in 2011. Feeding products like distillers grains to livestock reduces feed costs for beef, poultry, swine and dairy providers alike.

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