

Corn: Balancing demands for food and biofuel tricky

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Corn is the main ingredient for ethanol, a biofuel. Pumping gas today means pumping a blend of gasoline and ethanol. As a result, much of the corn grown to feed livestock has been redirected to produce ethanol. Food and fuel are in competition. Biofuel demand was one of the [major contributors](#) to high food prices during the 2007-08 food price crisis.

There were several motivations for using biofuel: high oil prices, [national energy security](#), and environmental concerns. These led to policies that encouraged more ethanol production.

Yet, oil prices have been falling, and food prices are [too](#). At the same time, the US crude oil supply is at a [30-year high](#). And the benefits of biofuels are [debatable](#). So, why are biofuels still [increasingly](#) produced?

A major reason is the continued [mandate](#) to blend ethanol with gasoline.

With continued demand for biofuels, can small farmers in developing countries benefit? Producing biofuel crops could help [reduce food insecurity](#) for smallholder farmers, and [enhance economic development](#). On the other hand, land acquisition for biofuel expansion has caused some farmers to [lose their land](#).

How can we strike a balance in achieving food security while supporting alternative fuels? First, encourage “second generation” biofuels made from, for example, [food waste](#). A [Low-Carbon Fuel Standard](#), could reduce pollution rather than simply promote more ethanol production.

Policies that create uneven playing fields for small farmers should be questioned. For example, the EU’s [sustainability criteria](#) imposes strict levels of reduced emissions for biofuel production, making it difficult for small farmers in Africa to enter the market.

Biofuels could worsen the food-fuel competition, or help reduce poverty and hunger for many. We must focus on finding the [right balance](#) in farming food and fueling our cars.

Read full, original post: [A Balancing Act: Food for the Hungry, Fuel for Your Car](#)