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Northeast Governors Urged to Consider New Research on Biofuels' Carbon Footprint in their Regional Efforts to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Sioux Falls, SD (January 27, 2009) – On behalf of its grassroots members nationwide, the American Coalition for Ethanol (ACE) today wrote to eleven governors in the Northeastern U.S. whose states are part of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, urging them to consider new research on how lifecycle analysis is being used to assign a value to biofuels' carbon footprint.

“[Lifecycle Analysis of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Associated with Starch-based Ethanol](#),” conducted by Global Insight for ACE and released last month, examines these issues:

- How agriculture contributes to and can help reduce greenhouse gases
- Lifecycle analysis of biofuels
- The direct and indirect GHG emissions associated with the production of biofuels, including a review of “indirect land use changes”
- Lifecycle analysis and GHG emissions associated with petroleum
- Identifying the marginal carbon footprint of biofuels versus the marginal impact of new sources of oil production

“The conclusions contain a straightforward and sober analysis of how this emerging tool, lifecycle analysis, can and should be used to calculate greenhouse gas emissions,” Brian Jennings, Executive Vice President of ACE, stated in the letter. “The report notes that some existing computer models of lifecycle emissions from biofuels, which utilize questionable assumptions and historic data to project future land use changes and associated emissions, require considerably more work to test their assumptions and predictions against casual, on-the-ground impacts. It also discusses how technology innovations are making both corn and ethanol production more efficient and carbon-friendly.”

Some recent research has tried to draw an indirect line between the growth of biofuels production in the United States and changes in land use in other countries, such as the clearing of environmentally sensitive land in Brazil. There are huge margins of error in some of this research (even up to 50 percent plus or minus), and there is little real-world data to accompany these computer models. Because using “lifecycle analysis” is a new way to ascribe a value to a fuel's carbon footprint, policymakers are urged to consider the whole body of scientific work in their discussions of climate change legislation.

The letter draws the Governors' attention to two recent peer-reviewed articles published in scientific journals:

- “[Biofuels, Land Use Change, and GHG Emissions: Some Unexplored Variables](#)”, published in *Environmental Science and Technology*, studied “indirect land use change” and finds that “there are no real data on what actually happens as demand increases for land for biofuel production in one part of the world and potentially leads to land clearing, because it is impossible to track these relationships in the real world.”
- “[Improvements in Life Cycle Energy Efficiency and Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Corn Ethanol](#)”, published in *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, finds that the lifecycle GHG emissions of modern corn-based ethanol production are on average 51 percent lower than that of gasoline.

ACE's letter concludes: “ACE and its members are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation fuels, and seek to work cooperatively with you and your colleagues in other northeastern states to develop and implement methodologies to calculate lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions as part of a low carbon fuel standard that are scientifically defensible.”

For more information about ethanol or about lifecycle analysis of biofuels' carbon footprint, visit www.ethanol.org.

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The American Coalition for Ethanol (ACE) is the grassroots voice of the U.S. ethanol industry, a national trade association for the ethanol industry with 1500 members nationwide, including farmers, ethanol producers, commodity organizations, businesses supplying goods and services to the ethanol industry, rural electric cooperatives, and individuals supportive of increased production and use of ethanol. For more information about ethanol or ACE, visit www.ethanol.org or call (605) 334-3381.