

EPA RFS Hearing Testimony
Kevin Ross/Farmer, Western Iowa Energy board member
Aug. 1, 2017

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify today,

I am Kevin Ross, a farmer from Southwest Iowa who raises corn, soybeans, hay, and cattle. I am also a founding board member of Western Iowa Energy and a Director serving on the National Corn Growers Association. I have been farming 19 years and have a strong recollection of the rural economy when I was young, seeing the struggles that my grandparents worked through.

The Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS) has helped shape the future, defining what we know as the bioeconomy. It is the driving force behind a robust market for agricultural products. The feed sources like DDGS, wet cakes, soy hulls, and vegetable oils are all parts of ag processing, but we were not taking advantage of their full economic value. With biodiesel and ethanol plants now dotted across the landscape, we created American jobs and brought our country more economic stability. Agriculture accounts for more than 33 percent of Iowa's economic output. Any policy that supports farming and promotes growth is a good thing for Iowa and our country. The RFS is one such policy.

Not only are rural areas benefitting from the RFS, urban centers of the US are also big winners. The air quality benefits that we gain from using biodiesel and ethanol have been measurable. Seldom do you hear about the major smog issues that once plagued our cities and harmed our health. Fuel consumers in our cities also see lower costs at the pump as a direct result of the success of this policy.

The nation is not only breathing a sigh of relief, many are also relieved to be using less foreign fuels that once controlled our policies overseas. The US must be a world leader in renewable energies and we must defend policies at home such as the RFS. Biofuel production, research, and education has rebuilt our rural economy here at home. This policy is making farmers stronger which makes our country's food supply stronger.

I have witnessed these hugely important rural economic wins in my role as a board member for Western Iowa Energy, LLC. Our biodiesel plant is in Wall Lake, IA, and for a small town it has been a big win. Not only have we returned to our investors the money they entrusted with us to start up the venture, we have returned jobs, jobs, and more jobs. We employ 30 plus people full time at our facility, but our daily business activities and their wages contribute to employ truckers, construction workers, the hairdresser, the electric cooperative, the packing plant, the waitress at the restaurant, insurance salesmen, the checker at the grocery store, soy crush employees, and of course our farmer neighbors. These are just a few of the places that our company dollars churn in rural Iowa. There is no doubt in my mind that we have made Wall Lake, Iowa as well as the surrounding area a far better place for the people living there now and the next generation.

While these dollars are working in our community and beyond, it saddens me to see the EPA underestimate the production ability of the greater biodiesel industry once again. The proposed RVO numbers being well below capacity are not only disappointing, but tarnish the reputation of what I believe will go down in history as one of the greatest pieces of American legislation for the broad reaching benefits I named above. At WIE we have run below our production capacity many of our ten plus years in business, and it is disheartening to see the EPA choke the potential of this industry once

again. We have recently, with new technology, increased our own capacity. We are not alone, and with renewed support from EPA more investment into biofuels will come raising efficiency once again. I ask you to revisit these proposed numbers and increase them to levels much more in line with the true capacity of our innovative industry, because at WIE we are "Fueling a Better Future."

Your work at the EPA in stewardship of the Renewable Fuels Standard is respected and very important. I ask that you do not continue to underestimate the ability of the biodiesel industry and increase the Renewable Volume Obligation proposed numbers. Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Ross