

Consumer Corner

Getting To The Root Of High Food Prices

by *Chuck Myers*

(NAPSA)—Food and fuel prices are higher than we are used to and some questions have arisen about alternative fuels, such as soy biodiesel. As a soybean farmer, I'd like to set the record straight.

Demand for soy biodiesel has very little impact on the price of food. U.S. Department of Agriculture figures show that only about 19 cents of each dollar spent on food goes to farms. The other 81 cents of every dollar we spend on food goes to such things as labor, energy and transportation.

Additionally, since a soybean consists mostly of protein-rich meal, and 98 percent of that meal is used to feed poultry and livestock for food use, demand for soy biodiesel increases the supply of soybean meal, which is used to produce more food, not less.

Fortunately, consumers seem to understand that the costs of food depend on many factors. A recent soybean checkoff-funded study showed that U.S. consumers are supportive of U.S. soybean farmers and the soy biodiesel industry. Called the "National Agriculture Image Survey," it showed that 82 percent of consumers agree foreign oil-producing countries and the high cost of fuel impacting farming and processing, packaging, storing and shipping food are to blame for food prices, rather than U.S. farmers.

The study also showed that consumers were very positive about soy biodiesel. Seventy-seven percent of consumers favor the use of biodiesel as a source of energy that can meet U.S. needs in the next five to 10 years. The more consumers were informed, the more positive they were, with 74 percent of consumers more favorable



A growing number of Americans favor the use of soy biodiesel.

toward biodiesel after hearing it benefits the environment. Seventy percent of consumers were more favorable toward biodiesel after hearing that it's a new green industry that creates jobs.

Not only that, but soy biodiesel has the highest "energy balance" of any transportation fuel, generating 93 percent more energy than it takes to produce. Simply put, for every unit of energy used to make soy biodiesel, 3.5 units of energy are gained. This is compared to petroleum diesel, which has a negative energy balance.

Soy biodiesel is one of the best solutions being offered to satisfy global demand for alternatives to fossil fuels, and will continue to play a role in the energy solutions of the future.

• *Mr. Myers grows soybeans, corn and alfalfa on his grain farm. He also serves as a United Soybean Board vice chairman and was the USB representative to the National Biodiesel Board for four years.*