

Today, the University of Wisconsin unveiled its latest anti-ethanol study, again funded by the National Wildlife Federation. The following statement is from Renewable Fuels Association Executive Vice President Geoff Cooper:

“This latest attack from the University of Wisconsin and National Wildlife Federation is simply another regurgitation of the same study these groups have released multiple times over the past several years. Those past studies have been thoroughly debunked and disputed, yet these groups keep coming back for more. The authors continue to abuse and misrepresent unreliable satellite data, and they continue to present highly uncertain modeling results as if they were the gospel truth.

“While the new study might make for a sensational headline, the facts on the ground tell a much different story about agricultural land use and the impacts of the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS). In reality, the amount of cropland used for corn production was 3.1 million acres (3.3 percent) lower in 2017 than it was in 2007 when the RFS was expanded. Meanwhile, farmers produced 16% more corn per acre this year than they did in 2007. In other words, the additional corn needed to support expansion of the ethanol industry came from increased productivity on existing cropland—not from converting native grasslands into new cropland.

“Overall, the footprint of all U.S. cropland has continued to shrink. Total cropland is nearly 100 million acres (20 percent) lower today than it was in 1969, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Higher yields for all crops mean less land is needed to meet demand. Even EPA has acknowledged this fact, recently presenting an analysis that showed U.S. crop production is up 18 percent since 2000, but harvested cropland is unchanged.

“Recent studies from USDA, Iowa State University, Purdue University, the Department of Energy, and others prove that land use change has been grossly overstated. Actual empirical evidence shows that farmers have responded to increased corn demand by using existing cropland more efficiently. In fact, the USDA study found that average corn ethanol reduces GHG emissions by 43% compared to gasoline—even when hypothetical land use change emissions are included.

“The authors would be well served to step outside of the ivory towers of academia and the halls of K Street lobby shops and talk with real farmers, who understand better than anyone that conserving and improving our natural resources is in the best interest of both the agriculture industry and the American consumer.”

Additionally, the RFA has previously disputed the findings by the study’s authors. More information is available at the following links:

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<http://www.ethanolrfa.org/2017/04/usda-county-level-data-dispute-new-nwf-study/>

<http://www.ethanolrfa.org/2015/04/university-of-wisconsin-study-based-on-shaky-foundation-of-faulty-data-and-conclusions/>