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## Should we have more hunger or ethanol in fuel?

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**By Ziad P S**

Corn is a staple food in many countries not only for humans but also as feed for cattle. Lower yield of corn globally could create more hunger. Eventually the prices for both the corn and meat would increase.

The cry for allowing more ethanol in gasoline by the ethanol industry is under consideration of the Environmental Protection Agency. The US government is already giving approval for adding more ethanol into gasoline even as the corn industry faces severe production pressure on falling yield this year, according to a study.

The study funded by the alliance of Food before Fuel, with members like the American Meat Institute, American Bakers Association and the Grocery Manufacturers Association is vehemently against the ethanol industry's petition to the Environmental Protection Agency to allow more ethanol into gasoline.

The study pointed out that if ethanol production expands, the food industry would lose half of the U.S. corn crop at the expense of other uses - including animal feed and exports.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Agriculture in its June edition of the monthly World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report has forecasted a lower yield of corn during 2009-10 at 11.9 billion bushels, down 155 million from last month's projection.

Despite the lower production estimation the forecast further stated that the about a third of the U.S. corn crop will go toward producing ethanol this year. In May USDA had predicted a production of 155.4 bushels per acre and on reports of delay in planting through the late May, it reduced the prospects.

Bill Lapp, president of Advanced Economic Solutions, said that if the EPA agrees to the petition and allows the cap on ethanol in gasoline to rise to 15% of a gallon - up from 10% now - the amount of land planted with corn could rise to 111 million acres at the expense of other crops.

Farmers are expected to plant 85 million acres of corn this year, according to USDA. Tom Elam, president of FarmEcon LLC and author of another report released by the Food Before Fuel alliance, said livestock producers have suffered severely since corn prices rose substantially in 2007 and he blamed ethanol producers.

A blend increase, though, is seen by some as necessary for the ethanol industry to meet a government production mandate of 15 billion gallons yearly by 2015.

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