

Ethanol Producers Meet In Omaha

(KLZA) Facing one of their most difficult seasons in history, hundreds of people involved in the production of ethanol met last week in Omaha. Brian Jennings, executive vice president of the American Coalition for Ethanol, says the worst drought to hit the region in decades is hurting farmers, consumers and everyone in between. (PLAY AUDIO :18 SECONDS)

U-S Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack was the keynote speaker Friday t the coalition's 25th annual conference.

Jennings, says this is an "incredibly challenging year" due to the drought and rising corn prices. Jennings says the future is uncertain for many producers in Nebraska and nationwide. (PLAY AUDIO :14 SECONDS)

Nebraska is the nation's number-two ethanol producer behind only Iowa. Nebraska has 24 plants operating with a capacity of more than two-billion gallons a year and consuming 700-million bushels of corn. Ethanol is responsible for about 12-hundred jobs in Nebraska.

Some ethanol plants have cut back production or closed down due to escalating corn costs and the drought. Jennings says there's much anxiety over the drought's impact on the corn crop, but waiving the Renewable Fuel Standard -- which insures more ethanol is blended into gasoline -- is not the way to go. (PLAY AUDIO :18 SECONDS)

As corn plants have withered in fields across the region in the hot, dry weather, the corn supply has thinned while demand has gone up. Gasoline prices have risen more than 20-cents a gallon in the past month.