

EPA Approves Pathway for Ethanol

After significant review and analysis, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that grain sorghum ethanol qualifies as a renewable fuel under the [Renewable Fuels Standard \(RFS\) Program](#). Governor Sam Brownback said approving the sorghum pathway will help enable the United States to meet RFS requirements with domestically-produced ethanol and generate economic growth in Kansas.

“Kansas is the top sorghum-producing state in the nation. Not only is sorghum a high-quality feed source for livestock producers but it is a critical non-food feedstock for ethanol plants across our state, where 60 percent of ethanol is produced from grain sorghum,” Governor Brownback said. “The RFS requires the United States to produce 36 billion gallons of renewable fuel by 2022, with an increasing requirement for renewable fuels from non-corn sources. This pathway will open the door for Kansas sorghum farmers and Kansas ethanol plants to help meet both the conventional biofuel and advanced biofuel mandates under the RFS.”

The final rule for the sorghum pathway was signed by EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson Nov. 30, 2012, and will take effect upon publication in the Federal Register. According to the final rule, EPA’s analysis indicated that grain sorghum ethanol produced at dry-mill facilities that utilize natural gas for process energy meets the 20 percent greenhouse gas emission reduction threshold to qualify as a renewable fuel under RFS guidelines. Further, the final rule specifies that grain sorghum ethanol produced at dry-mill facilities that utilize specified forms of biogas for process energy and most electricity production meets the 50 percent greenhouse gas reduction threshold to qualify as an advanced biofuel under RFS guidelines.

Governor Brownback recently sent a letter to EPA Administrator Jackson urging approval of the sorghum pathway and had direct conversations with EPA officials expressing the importance of this pathway for Kansas. He has also invited Administrator Jackson and her staff to visit Kansas ethanol plants that use sorghum grown by Kansas farmers to produce ethanol.

Western Plains Energy in Oakley produces ethanol from sorghum and is ready to use waste from beef feedlots and swine operations along with other landfill waste to generate methane gas to power its ethanol plant. Conestoga Energy in Garden City is sequestering carbon dioxide in oil wells and also is using sorghum to produce ethanol. Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Dale Rodman said Administrator Jackson and her staff could benefit from seeing the willingness of Kansas ethanol producers to be innovative in their efforts to produce clean, renewable energy. He said it is important to note that Kansas sorghum farmers and Kansas ethanol producers are leading the way to transition ethanol to a non-food based biofuel.

“The ingenuity found in Kansas is second to none. These ethanol plants and likely many more have made significant financial investments necessary to produce ethanol from sorghum and meet advanced biofuel standards. Kansas sorghum farmers and ethanol producers are ready and willing to help meet RFS requirements but have been unable to without the sorghum pathway,” Secretary Rodman said. “Approving the sorghum pathway is a critical step forward in our nation’s quest to become energy independent. Not only will we be able to meet advanced biofuel requirements with domestically-produced ethanol instead of importing it from foreign nations but it will also encourage growth on Main Street.”