



## Iowa Farmers' Views on the Bioeconomy

Building on Extension's "Local Conversations" Effort

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## 2007 "Year of the Bioeconomy"

- Stepped up plant construction
- Gov't support: Iowa Power Fund
- ISU grants, partnerships: ConocoPhillips
- Increased public awareness



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## The Bioeconomy in Iowa: Local Conversations

- Extension-led discussions state-wide
- 96 Counties
- 950 Participants
- Forums to share hopes, concerns
- Objective: Shape Extension's approach to bioeconomy research and education/outreach



## 2007 Farm Poll

- Random sample; 1,095 respondents
- Series of questions on bioeconomy
- Like *Local Conversations*, gathered data on farmers' hopes, concerns, opinions about bioeconomy development initiatives and potential impacts
- Complements *Local Conversations* with quantitative data – bolsters conclusions

## Bioeconomy Opportunities: *Employment, economic growth*

Revitalize struggling rural areas  
High-quality employment  
Potential boost to livestock industry



### Farm Poll:

- Ethanol plant employment a boost to rural economies – 79%
- DGS co-product could help revive cattle industry – 59%



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## Iowa Bioeconomy Leadership

Iowans support state leadership in biofuels development,  
energy independence

### Farm Poll:

- Iowa should be world leader in bioeconomy research, innovation – 77%
- Movement toward Iowa energy independence – 86%
- State support?:
  - 75%: biofuels tax breaks until public acceptance high
  - 61%: state vehicles should use E85, B20
  - 52%: biorenewables should be ISU #1 priority

**Clear support for state, university bioeconomy  
development efforts**

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## Bioeconomy Challenges: *The Environment*

Corn stover harvest and erosion, loss of CRP, wildlife habitat, water quality

### Farm Poll:

- Stover removal will increase erosion – 75%
- Bringing marginal land into grain production will decrease wildlife habitat – 77%
- Continuous corn has negative environmental impacts – 34%
- Cellulosic feedstock production will benefit wildlife – 32%
- Increased ethanol production will have negative water quality impacts – 28%



**Clear concern about potential environmental impacts**

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## Bioeconomy Challenges: *The Environment*

Conservation Reserve Program  
Acreage?

### Farm Poll:

- Will probably or definitely convert CRP to crops – 30% of contract holders ~15,000
- Average acreage to be converted - 42

Extrapolated to population:

- ~**665,000 acres**
- **36% of current total**



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## Bioeconomy Challenges: *Structural Issues*

Where will the money go?  
Concern about out-of-state investment in ethanol



### Farm Poll:

- In the future, only investors will be able to afford land – 79%
- Biofuels production will be dominated by agribusiness corporations – 70%
- Higher corn prices will result in larger and fewer farms – 62%



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## Bioeconomy Challenges: *Alternative Energy and Conservation*

Broader thinking needed: wind, solar, hydro  
Energy conservation

### Farm Poll:

- Wind energy potentially important – 91%
- Solar power viable home-heating alternative – 60%
- Interest in producing energy on-farm – 42%
- Interest in information on producing energy on-farm – 82%
- Focus on biorenewables distracting from attention to energy conservation – 46%



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## Implications for Extension

- Livestock industry and the bioeconomy
  - Focus on complementarities, avoid competition
- Distribution of bioeconomy benefits
  - Foster local ownership of plants, complementary businesses
- Soil and water conservation
  - Ensure that progress continues
- Alternatives, energy conservation
  - Research and outreach to support other renewable energy options, efficiency gain

## Extension and the Bioeconomy?

Healthy people, healthy  
environments, healthy economies

Thank you!!