

Ethanol maker squeezes more from corn

By DARRELL BOONE

In agriculture, some things are givens. Milk comes from cows, and eggs come from chickens. And ethanol comes from corn, and biodiesel always comes from soybeans, right?

Don't be too quick to say "sure." You would be wrong.

At Central Indiana Ethanol near Marion, the company recently started a corn oil separation unit to extract corn oil from their distillers grains. From there, the oil that's extracted goes to

Key Points

- Central Indiana Ethanol now extracts corn oil from distillers grains.
- Corn oil is shipped to another company for processing into biodiesel.
- Ethanol remains this plant's most important product.

produce, you guessed it, biodiesel.

"We took this step because it adds another value-added product to our company's product mix," says Jeff Knutson, CIE plant manager. "While installing this unit wasn't cheap, we're confident it will be worth it. We anticipate this will enhance both our profitability and quality of our DDG, where it will increase protein and reduce fat content."

This makes CIE the first ethanol plant in Indiana to get into the biodiesel business. According to Knutson, some plants in the western Corn Belt, maybe 25 to 30 out of about 150 plants, are making biodiesel from corn.

"The ethanol industry is still pretty new in Indiana, and I suspect

many of the plants want to get a better handle on making ethanol before they get into biodiesel," says Knutson. "I know we did. However, I think that it will become common in Indiana in the next few years."

How it works

The corn oil separation unit essentially involves the use of a very high speed centrifuge to spin the corn oil out of the stillage. That term refers to partially processed corn. The centrifuge step comes before producing the syrup that's added to distillers grains.

Once corn oil is extracted, it's moved to a holding tank, awaiting transportation to a plant in Michigan for processing into actual biodiesel fuel. Consideration is being given to both manufacturing the biodiesel and upgrading the corn oil to food-grade product on-site at Marion in the future.

"We want to do these things in small steps," Knutson explains.

While CIE has siphoned off corn oil to create an additional coproduct, it won't become a serious competitor to the company's ethanol business. Expected production of corn oil for biodiesel will be about 1.3 million gallons per year. The plant currently produces about 52 million gallons of ethanol annually.

Boone writes from Wabash.

■ Read more on Page 48.



ONE MORE PRODUCT: Extracting corn oil from distillers grains and storing it in the small tank in the background allows Jeff Knutson and Central Indiana Ethanol to get another product from corn processing.



THE REAL McCoy: Jeff Knutson siphons off pure corn oil from an extraction process. It's currently used to make biodiesel, and could be the feedstock for food-grade corn oil, as well.

"We've always been pleased with the FBI buildings we've built."

— Bob Suiter

Bob Suiter in his new shop.

Satisfaction — value from start to finish.

Talk to FBI... and you'll deal with professionals who will put your needs first. Our goal is to ensure you get the *right building for your operation* — an enduring asset to your farm. Whether you need a comfortable shop or spacious machine shed, FBI will give you the helpful planning tools, resources and advice you need to make the best decision. And you can count on quality construction by company-employed crews.

Call FBI today and request your FREE floor planning kit with scaled machinery pieces!

"It has been a life-long dream to have a nice shop ... I chose FBI because my number one consideration is quality."

Bob Suiter
Raub, Indiana

