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## 'An excellent harvest'

### Marion ethanol plant has produced 40 million gallons

BY BARRY WILLIAM WALSH  
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Farmers delivering truckloads of corn to the Central Indiana Ethanol plant have been able to complete their sales in less than 15 minutes on average.

That's just one of the many things that CIE General Manager Mitch Miller is proud of with the organization's first fall harvest.

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"It was excellent," Miller said. "As far as harvest, we've bought a lot of grain direct from farmers and we continue to do so. The farmers are especially enjoying the quick turn in and out of the plant. From the time the truck comes into our facility he's leaving on an average of 12 minutes later."

Miller said it has been a good year for CIE, which first began operation July 17.

Zoom Photo



DANIEL JOHNSON / dhjohnson@marion.gannett.com

QUICK TURNAROUND - Farmers delivering truckloads of corn to the Central Indiana Ethanol plant have been able to complete their sales in less than 15 minutes on average, CIE General Manager Mitch Miller said Thursday.

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By the end of this year, Miller said he expected to reach about 40 million gallons of ethanol produced, a figure which he said would increase in 2008.

"We are ramping our production up from a 40 million gallon per year rate to a 50 million gallon per year rate," he said.

With the increased ethanol production will come a greater demand for corn from farmers in Grant and surrounding counties.

Another positive thing that has occurred since the plant opened was the opening of the first gas station in Grant County that offers E-85 ethanol gas.

"We are just beginning to direct supply E-85," Miller said. "The first station in Grant County is the Citgo on Ind. 18, on the west edge of Marion. The average price of that is 50 cents less than regular unleaded gasoline.

"I would say by the first quarter of 2008 there will be a few more E-85 stations in Marion."

Miller noted that most of the ethanol produced by the plant is sold in Ohio and Indiana.

He also said the plant was affected by a price decline in ethanol that was associated with an increased number of plants that had opened.

"The price of ethanol did decline in the last three months due to a lot of capacity coming on all near the same time," he said. "Now construction is slowing down and new plant start-ups aren't as frequent and that product is finding its way into the market. The price of ethanol is rising."

Miller is not the only one who thinks the plant has benefited Grant County.

John Woodmansee, Grant County Purdue Education Extension Coordinator, said the plant has given farmers one more market for their goods.

"It certainly appears to (have benefited the county)," he said. "They are doing a lot of things right."

One of the things that the company has done right is create a system that recycles water they use in production of the ethanol.

"These ethanol plants use a lot of water," Woodmansee said. "We had a dry



A CLOSER LOOK - Central Indiana Ethanol plant lab manager Larry Larson looks over figures as he monitors the fermentation cycle for ethanol and certifies the end product before it is loaded into trucks.

[+ Zoom Photo](#)



A DAY'S WORK - Mark Johnson moves dry feed around next to the the cooling towers. Along the cement wall lies leftover corn feed modified with moisture for a client.

year, but nobody's well ran dry, and that's a good thing. I think they are doing a lot of things right. I guess we'll just have to see what happens in the future."

Woodmansee also noted that corn supplies in Grant County and its neighboring counties should be enough to meet the needs of the CIE, but said it remained to be seen what effect new plants opening in other areas would have.

"I would be looking more at the bigger picture of how many plants are going to actually get into production the next three or four years," Woodmansee said. "Overall that would have an effect, certainly. What the effect will be, I don't know yet."

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