

Record Crowd Hears About Wind Energy; Food vs. Fuel Controversy

Interest in the growing number of wind ‘farms’ across the Illinois’ agricultural landscape and the controversy of food versus fuel blew in a large crowd at CAPS’ annual Midwest Seminar held September 11 in Morris, Illinois.

“The subject of wind energy was a huge draw,” says Royce Bryant, AFM, ARA, CAPS Regional Vice President based in Memphis. “We knew there was an interest in general, but we did not anticipate the turnout we had at the meeting. It was a great crowd and they came to collect information.”

Dwight Farber (below), project manager for Horizon Energy, briefed a very attentive audience on how properties are selected to become sites of wind farms. He noted that there are certain parts of the state that are very conducive to having wind towers. “However,” he noted, “just because the wind always seems to be blowing across your property doesn’t necessarily make it a viable location for a wind turbine.”

He explained that there have been many studies done across the country, and particularly in north and central Illinois, that show where the winds are the most consistent. He told the group that in some cases wind turbine companies will erect air sampling towers that record wind levels at varying heights for upwards to two years.



“In some cases the optimum height for the turbine may be 100 feet. In others it may be 200 feet or higher.”

He also noted that the speed of the wind is extremely important. He explained that a one mile-per-hour in wind speed difference increases exponentially the amount of electricity that a single tower might produce.

Another key factor on placement of wind towers is access to power lines. He said that North Dakota has some of the highest potential for wind farms, but it lacks the infrastructure to move the electricity once it is generated.

“There are many locations in Illinois that are very favorable to being sites for wind farms because of

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the two primary factors....availability of strong and consistent winds, and powerline grids to move the electricity the towers create.”

Farber was followed by Rod Weinzerl (right), executive director of the Illinois Corn Growers Association, who talked point-blank about the accusations that have gone around the industry and the nation regarding corn being diverted from use as a food commodity and used for generating ethanol instead.

Citing a number of studies done by government as well as private agencies, Weinzerl noted that the price for a typical box of corn flake cereal is driven by the costs of processing, packaging, marketing and transporting the cereal,” he said. He stated sardonically that the price of the corn in a box of cereal has gone up dramatically in recent times--in fact it has doubled--from three cents up to six cents.

Responding to questions from the audience, Weinzerl stressed that communications to consumers is vital to keep



telling the real story of agriculture. He noted that the recent anti-ethanol public relations efforts by the Grocery Manufacturers Association have basically fallen on deaf ears as far as consumers are concerned. The public just did not buy the message, he said, specifically since the prices being charged for grocery items have remained high even after the prices paid for corn have receded. He also noted that when major food companies then released record profit figures the credibility of the negative campaign came into serious question.

Members of the CAPS team then wrapped up the afternoon program with a review of current farmland value trends. At left, Chip Johnston, real estate agent, makes his presentation on property value trends and issues.

The events of the day concluded with a social.