



04-17-09

## **EPA seeks public comment on raising ethanol blend level to E15**

**By Agri-Pulse Staff**

© Copyright Agri-Pulse Communications, Inc.

Responding to a request from Growth Energy and 54 ethanol manufacturers to authorize up to 15% ethanol blends with gasoline, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is seeking public comments on the waiver application. The 30-day comment period will run through at least May 20<sup>th</sup>. Under law, the EPA is required to grant or deny the request no later than Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009.

Since 1978, the limit has been at ten volume percent ethanol (E10) for conventional (non flex-fuel) vehicles. The Growth Energy request, submitted on March 6, 2009, asks EPA to authorize E15, a 15% ethanol blend. Ethanol proponents argue that increasing the blend rate is needed to keep pace with the renewable fuel mandates under the 2007 Energy Independence and Security Act and to assure continued investment in bringing next generation biofuels to market. The law requires 11.1 billion gallons of renewable fuel (mainly ethanol) to be blended in 2009, 12.95 billion in 2010, 13.95 billion in 2011, rising steadily to 36 billion gallons by 2022.

With reduced liquid fuel demand due to the recession, ethanol producers are concerned that the market will soon reach a “blend wall” at the 10 percent blend rate, a point at which the liquid fuel market is saturated below the mandated ethanol production level. Many environmental and consumer groups and small engine and car manufacturers are concerned that the increased blend rate might damage pollution control equipment, reduce air quality, and undermine vehicle and equipment performance and warranties. Ethanol proponents maintain that many years of experience with higher blends in Brazil demonstrate that higher blends would not cause environmental or equipment damage. The EPA and Department of Energy are currently testing the effects of higher blend rates on engine performance and emissions.

For more information on the E15 request: <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/additive.htm>