

## Ethanol plants generate 15% of state's emissions

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Ethanol plants contributed 7.6 million metric tons to a total 52 million metric tons of greenhouse-gas emissions found in the state's new inventory of major manufacturers, businesses and power plants.

The largest share of emissions came from fermenting grain at the plants, not from burning natural gas or coal. Burning biomass such as switchgrass at various industrial plants added another 0.13 million metric tons, the inventory by Iowa's Department of Natural Resources found.



The harmful gases emitted at the plants amounted to a fraction of that coming from most coal-fired power plants. The exception was a large corn-processing and ethanol plant in Clinton, which ranked eighth on a list of top 10 greenhouse-gas emitters. The coal-burning plant is run by ADM, the nation's largest ethanol producer.

The emissions generated by ethanol production are one reason why some environmentalists downplay the benefit of renewable fuels. Others insist they are far more beneficial than burning fossil fuels.

The problem is one of perspective: In Iowa, the top ethanol-producing state, plants emit slightly more greenhouse gases than that from livestock manure or, believe it or not, belching cattle.

Cows and other ruminants - mammals that chew and rechew plants, forming a lot of gas - produce methane and other gases equivalent to 4.3 million metric tons of carbon dioxide in Iowa, based on 2005 figures compiled by the Center for Climate Strategies, a state consulting firm.

Livestock manure, and the "management" of it, accounted for the equivalent of 6.6 million metric tons of carbon dioxide in 2005.