

Devils Lake Daily Journal
November 07 Article

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During our last discussion, I focused on tourism as economic development and briefly mentioned that agriculture still remains the #1 industry sector for North Dakota.

North Dakota alone produces over 50% of the *nations* total production of Flaxseed (94%), Canola (92%), Dry Edible Peas (71%), Durum Wheat (59%), Pinto Beans (52%), Oil Sunflowers (52%) and Non Oil Sunflowers (51%) (ND Dept of Ag.)

Unfortunately, historically most of the local production is shipped out of the area as a commodity. The driving influences of energy and more specifically renewable energy has pushed for new development and use of these commodities. The traditional use has been for food – both human and animal consumption of some form. Today, corn is also pursued as an input to corn based ethanol. Canola and Soybeans are an input into bio diesel. The waste of these processes can then be utilized as a feedstock for the livestock industry. The livestock industry itself can produce methane as a source of energy, manure as a fertilizer ingredient to grow the very products utilized at the plant and a simplistic circle is made. The development of cellulosic based ethanol will call for other starches as inputs such as corn cobs, stalks, wood waste, switchgrass etc.

However, the figures of each process must make economic sense to pursue. All of the renewable based plants have inputs that are highly variable. Currently there are government subsidies that assist to uphold the industry and certainly with oil at \$95+ barrel, all the renewables look more promising and increased science and technology will make all more efficient as well as government mandates which will force the issue. The future of cellulosic ethanol is also becoming more clear, but is not foreseen to be mainstream for several more years. Bio diesel isn't as popular, has less of a margin and frankly, diesel just isn't as popular in the US as it is in Europe where we see greater concentration and strides of that industry.

Livestock development also has its pros and cons. Which animal will eat the most of the dried distiller's grains and other waste from the facilities? Which one creates the most profit to the owner? Increased livestock also increases the service providers to that industry – feed mills, veterinarians, further processing centers (beef, hog, dairy), rendering facilities etc.

I would be remiss if I discussed renewable energy and did not mention wind energy development. ND is certainly conducive to wind development as we have an abundant resource of wind and the towers do not highly interfere with the productive agriculture land. The transmission and energy storage issues are also continuously being developed and we will most certainly see additional wind development in the future as well as services to that industry.

A meeting of those interested in Lake Region development of Renewable Energy will be held on Tuesday November 27th at 9AM in the Chautauqua Gallery at Lake Region State College. A second meeting, dedicated to Livestock Development will be held on Friday December 7th at 9AM also in the Chautauqua Gallery. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.