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# White House reviewing 2011 ethanol standard

By Tom Doggett

WASHINGTON | Tue Nov 16, 2010 6:01pm EST

(Reuters) - The White House is reviewing the Environmental Protection Agency's final rule on how much ethanol and other renewable automobile fuels will be sold next year.

The EPA proposed in July that such fuels would account for 7.95 percent of gasoline sales next year to meet a congressional mandate that at least 13.95 billion gallons of renewable fuels be produced in 2011.

EPA officials could not be reached for comment on whether the final rule would differ from its July proposal.

The agency plans to issue the final rule by the end of this month, according to the White House budget office.

The 2011 number is less than the 8.25 percent renewable fuels standard set for this year. But it is not designed to cut ethanol sales because the gasoline market is expected to expand next year.

The amount of renewable fuels is mandated by Congress to rise to 13.95 billion gallons next year from 12.95 billion gallons this year. The target is 36 billion gallons by 2022.

Most U.S. ethanol is made from corn and gradually cellulosic fuels -- using wood chips or switchgrass -- are expected to play a bigger role.

But cellulosic production has not grown as rapidly as Congress had hoped and as a result, the EPA had proposed lower cellulosic output for next year than the 250 million gallons set by Congress.

Cellulosic biofuels production would have to be 5 million to 17.1 million gallons next year, and 0.004 to 0.015 percent of gasoline sales.

The EPA previously proposed that for next year biodiesel production be set at 800 million gallons and 0.68 percent of fuel sales, and advance biofuels output would total 1.35 billion gallons and be 0.77 percent of gasoline sales.

Ethanol sales, however, could rise as the EPA has approved raising the ethanol blend rate to 15 percent in a gallon of gasoline from 10 percent, for vehicles built since the 2007 model year.

The agency also could decide as early as next month whether so-called E15 gasoline can be used in cars and trucks made between 2001 and 2006.

(Reporting by Tom Doggett; Editing by Dale Hudson)

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