

Corn, Energy & The Wisconsin Economy

HIGH SCHOOL | GRADES 9–12 | ONE-PAGE FACT SHEET

Corn is Wisconsin's largest crop by planted acreage and sits at the intersection of the state's food system, energy policy, and rural economy. Data below is from USDA NASS and Wisconsin industry sources.

PRODUCTION & YIELD TREND

2025 Wisconsin corn planted acreage	4.15 million acres
2025 Wisconsin grain production	605 million bushels
2025 Wisconsin yield (record)	188.0 bu/acre
2024 Wisconsin yield	174.0 bu/acre
2025 U.S. production (record)	17.0 billion bushels
Wisconsin corn stored on Dec. 1, 2025	528 million bushels (59% on-farm)
Average WI price received, Nov. 2025	\$3.86 per bushel

THE ETHANOL & RENEWABLE FUELS CONNECTION

- Wisconsin has nine ethanol plants producing more than 500 million gallons annually, placing the state among the top ethanol producers nationally.
- Roughly 37% of the state's corn crop is processed into ethanol, supporting about 19,000 jobs and \$4.2 billion in economic activity.
- Co-products return to the food system: distillers grains are a high-protein livestock feed, and extracted corn oil goes to biodiesel.
- Higher blends (E15/Unleaded 88, E85) and sustainable aviation fuel are active state and federal policy questions.

FOOD, FIBER & FUEL — THE FULL VALUE CHAIN

FOOD	FIBER	FUEL
Sweeteners, starches, oils, and masa for the food industry. Feed for the dairy herd behind Wisconsin's #1 national cheese ranking.	Bioplastics, adhesives, packaging, textile and paper processing inputs. A growing bio-based materials sector reducing petroleum inputs.	Ethanol, biodiesel feedstock, and SAF research. Corn-based fuels are a domestic energy source produced in rural Wisconsin.

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS PROMPTS

Economics — Wisconsin's 2025 crop was 18% larger than 2024, while the November price was slightly lower than the year before. Explain the relationship using supply and demand. What does this mean for a farm's revenue?

Sustainability — Yields have risen sharply over recent decades on similar acreage. Identify the agronomic, genetic, and technological factors behind that trend and evaluate the environmental trade-offs.

Policy & land use — Research the Renewable Fuel Standard. About a quarter of Wisconsin's corn acres are tied to ethanol — debate that land use against the alternatives.

CAREER PATHWAYS IN WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE

Agronomy and crop consulting • Ag engineering and precision-ag technology • Food science • Animal science and dairy management • Ag business, finance, and risk management • Grain merchandising and logistics • Renewable fuels operations • Ag communications and public policy • Soil and water conservation

Wisconsin agriculture and food processing support hundreds of thousands of jobs — most of them off the farm.