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Pennsylvania's Agricultural Community Takes a Big Hit with EPA's New Gas Car Ban

PennAg's Executive Vice President Chris Herr shares his opinion on the Environmental Protection Agency's newest mandate that U.S. automakers make battery-powered or plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (EVs) by 2032.

HARRISBURG, PA- Growing up on a small farm in eastern Lancaster County, I learned from a young age that agriculture is more than just business—it is the bedrock of our country.

After 40 years in the industry, I've seen firsthand how policies can dictate and indirectly impact agriculture. Some have shaken its firm bedrock. Several policies have recently proven troublesome to agriculture significantly as our nation's fragile supply chains still recover from the pandemic. The Biden administration's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 's new rule is one of those policies that threatens the American farmer and these recovering supply chains.

In late March 2024, the EPA announced that two-thirds of vehicles sold by U.S. automakers must be battery-powered or plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (EVs) by 2032. Taking it one step further, the EPA decided that 25% of new long-haul trucks and 40% of medium-size trucks must also go electric. Heavy-duty trucks are an integral element of the American food supply chain, and with these regulations in place, their growth could falter.

As the longtime Executive Vice President of PennAg Industries Association and having grown up in farming, I understand how critical it is to protect our environment. However, these strict standards leave farmers across the country with limited options to ship products that feed the nation and their own families.

According to the latest data from the 2022 Census of Agriculture, farmers have the most to lose, with 1.47 million farms owning 3.16 million trucks and/or pickups. At this pivotal moment in preserving rural America, the farming community must not be left out of the equation.

Achieving the same level of performance as diesel models is of utmost importance for those in the agriculture industry. However, EVs designed for farming are not a sustainable alternative as they are not accessible to all farmers. Additionally, without sufficient charging infrastructure across the state, truck drivers handling the shipment of critical goods could face delays, further impacting the American consumer.

Following an aggressive shift to EVs, the U.S. will be forced to become increasingly reliant on other countries, like China, which dominates the processing of critical minerals used in EV manufacturing.



Across the agricultural industry, American farmers are already growing less and less food as the nation becomes more dependent on foreign countries.

In 2019, the United States experienced a blow to its agricultural system, with product imports exceeding product exports for the first time in 50 years.

As of today, an increased trade deficit, combined with these new EPA regulations and incoming food insecurity, is a situation that cannot be ignored. The U.S. cannot afford to be reliant on foreign countries in another critical sector; doing so would put our own security at risk.

All farms are fighting through hardships of animal disease and commodity prices, supply and demand challenges, and having to make difficult decisions on investing their money to ensure their farm generates a positive Return on Investment. In its current state, the agriculture industry is not ready to take on a transition that is aggressive while maintaining America's recovering food supply chain.

Biden's EPA must consider the challenges this new rule will have on farmers across the industry and its reverberating impact on all consumers.

If the federal government proceeds with these strict standards, Pennsylvania and other parts of the U.S., like America's midwestern breadbasket, will be forced to deal with the consequences. Empty promises are not enough; this issue deserves the attention and action of Pennsylvania's U.S. Senators Bob Casey and John Fetterman on behalf of the farming industry and those who put them in office.

Farmers and the American consumer deserve better.

- *Chris Herr*

Vice President of PennAg Industries Association