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NEWS UPDATE February 22, 2019

Top Stories

Exclusive: U.S., China sketch outlines of deal to end trade war – sources

By Jeff Mason, Reuters • • Posted February 22, 2019

The United States and China have started to outline commitments in principle on the stickiest issues in their trade dispute, marking the most significant progress yet toward ending a seven-month trade war, according to sources familiar with the negotiations. The world's two largest economies have slapped tit-for-tat tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of goods, slowing global economic growth, skewing supply chains and disrupting manufacturing. [read more ...]

China to Propose $30 Billion More U.S. Agriculture Purchases

By Shuping Niu, Steven Yang, Isis Almeida, and Mario Parker, Bloomberg • • Posted February 22, 2019

The offer to buy the extra farm produce would be part of the memoranda of understanding under discussion by U.S. and Chinese negotiators in Washington. The purchases would be on top of pre-trade war levels and continue for the period covered by the memoranda. U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said it was "premature" to comment on what or how much China might buy as part of a trade deal. "I don't want to raise expectations," he told reporters attending the department's annual outlook conference in Washington on Thursday. "If we reach an agreement on structural reforms we can recover markets very, very quickly."
[read more ...]

U.S. EPA gets 37 bids for small refinery waivers through mid-February

By Jarrett Renshaw, Reuters • • Posted February 22, 2019

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has received 37 applications for small refinery waivers for 2018 from the U.S. Renewable Standard (RFS) through mid-February, according to data released on Thursday by the agency. The 37 applications matches the total the EPA received last year, when it approved waivers at small refineries owned by oil majors Exxon Mobil Corp and Chevron Corp. [read more ...]

Policy & Politics

Nebraska Governor Is Skeptical Trump Will Meet Ethanol Timeline

By Shruti Singh and Mario Parker, Bloomberg • • Posted February 22, 2019

Donald Trump told the heartland back in October a boost to ethanol use may come this summer. Nebraska's governor isn't sure he'll make that timeline. Trump has pledged to have policy in place that would allow higher sales of corn-based ethanol before the summer begins. Nebraska's Pete Ricketts doesn't think that's going to happen by Memorial Day, the kickoff to the summer driving season. [read more ...]

Company to Expand Pre-Blended E15 Availability to 17 More Terminals

By Todd Neeley, DTN Staff Reporter • • Posted February 22, 2019

GROWMARK Energy has started offering pre-blended E15 at 17 additional terminals across the country, ahead of the expected release of a new EPA rule to allow year-round E15 sales. The company is offering pre-blended E15 at several Magellan terminals including those in Bettendorf, Iowa; Carthage, Missouri; Des Moines, Iowa, Doniphan, Nebraska; Enid, Oklahoma; Fort Smith, Arkansas; Heyworth, Illinois; Kansas City, Kansas; North Little Rock, Arkansas; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Omaha; Palmyra, Missouri; Scott City, Kansas; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Springfield, Missouri; Topeka, Kansas; and Wichita, Kansas. [read more ...]

Calif. threatens to sue after Trump's one-two punch

By Anne C. Mulkern, E&E News reporter • • Posted February 22, 2019

California signaled yesterday it would sue the Trump administration to defend its ability to limit tailpipe pollution. It came a day after the White House abandoned talks with state officials over its plan to scrap the clean car rules. California Attorney General Xavier Becerra called the White House's move part of an ongoing "retreat from our nation's existing Clean Car Standards. Abandoning ship on the U.S.'s serious push to tackle pollution is another sign of impotence and fallibility, something Americans aren't accustomed to," Becerra said in a statement. "California and states throughout

America are prepared to defend our national Clean Car Standards even if the Trump Administration intends to go AWOL." [read more …]

White House breaks off talks with Calif.

Maxine Joselow, E&E News reporter • • Posted February 22, 2019

The White House is ending negotiations with California over its rollback of Obama-era clean car rules. Officials from the White House, Department of Transportation and EPA will "discontinue discussions with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) regarding the proposed Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Rule," the White House said in a statement yesterday. [read more …]

Trump-California rift widens as auto emissions talks fail

By Steve Holland, David Shepardson, Valerie Volcovici, Ben Klayman and Joe White, Reuters • • Posted February 22, 2019

U.S. federal officials have decided to end negotiations with California over the Trump administration's plans to roll back fuel economy rules designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a government official said on Wednesday. California and 19 other states have demanded the Trump administration abandon a proposal made in August to freeze fuel efficiency standards after 2020 and strip California of the ability to impose stricter rules. [read more …]

SD Farmers Union Calls Out GM on Weak Octane Proposals

By Karla Hofhenke, S.D. Farmers Union • • Posted February 22, 2019

In a letter to General Motors Chair and CEO Mary Barra yesterday, South Dakota Farmers Union President Doug Sombke challenged the automaker on its claim that 98 RON (Research Octane Number) or higher gasoline was not feasible and called on them to look at their own historical position of identifying 100 RON fuels as the right fuel for the 2020-2025 time frame. Sombke took issue with remarks by GM's Dan Nicholson at the National Ethanol Conference last week where Nicholson said a 98 RON fuel was a bridge too far and cited numerous obstacles, all of which can be easily addressed according to Sombke. [read more …]

Pelosi's past record with ag may point to future

By Philip Brasher, Agri Pulse • • Posted February 22, 2019

Bob Dinneen, who was president of the Renewable Fuels Association in 2007, said Pelosi "really had a pivotal role in making sure that the RFS was the progressive, market-driven" policy that it is. "Pelosi, then and now, really looks at that with a fair degree of pride, as she should," said Dinneen. Said Peterson, "Without her, we wouldn't have the RFS." [read more …]

EPA agrees to conduct years-late RFS air pollution study

By Eric Wolff, Politico • • Posted February 22, 2019

EPA says it will conduct a long-overdue "anti-backsliding" study of the air pollution impacts of the Renewable Fuel Standard under the partial settlement of a lawsuit with the Sierra Club. In a pre-publication notice issued yesterday, EPA opened a 30-day comment period on the settlement with Sierra Club to conduct the study by March 30, 2020.
[read more …]

Tesla drives jump in EV sales

Anne C. Mulkern, E&E News reporter • • Posted February 22, 2019

Sales of electric vehicles in California jumped to a new high late last year, largely driven by purchases of Tesla Inc.'s Model 3. Plug-in EVs grew to 4.7 percent of all new car sales in October

through December, up from 2.6 percent in the same period of 2017, the California New Car Dealers Association said in a report. [read more ...]

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