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**Chadrad Communications, Inc.**  
226 Bordeaux St - Chadron, NE 69337  
308-432-5545 fax 308-432-5601  
E-mail: [kcsr@chadrad.com](mailto:kcsr@chadrad.com)

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**(Regional)-Corn Shortage Idles 20 Ethanol Plants Nationwide**

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 02/11/2013 09:26 AM

By JIM SALTER

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) - The persistent drought is taking a toll on producers of ethanol, with corn becoming so scarce that nearly two dozen ethanol plants have been forced to halt production.

The Renewable Fuels Association, an ethanol industry trade group, provided data to The Associated Press showing that 20 of the nation's 211 ethanol plants have ceased production over the past year, including five in January. While most expect to resume, they won't likely do so until after 2013 corn is harvested in late August or September.

Industry experts don't expect an ethanol shortage because millions of barrels are stockpiled and the remaining 191 plants are still producing.

But there is growing concern about the high price of corn and what happens if the drought lingers through another corn-growing season.