Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich was the only presidential candidate to receive straight “A”s in a report card on agricultural issues released November 30 by the Iowa Corn Growers Association.

While other GOP presidential candidates have called for phasing out federal energy tax credits, including those for ethanol, Gingrich has voiced his support for the corn-based fuel additive.

“I have always been a supporter of ethanol. I even supported ethanol when it was called gasohol in 1984,” Gingrich said in several recent speeches in Iowa, including at the Republican Party of Iowa’s November 4 Ronald Reagan Dinner. “And I did it for a practical reason. If my choice is for the next dollar to go to Iran or to go to Iowa, I pick Iowa.”

The “Corn Caucus Project” gave letter grades to eight major presidential candidates on 10 agriculture-related issues including ethanol and energy policy, the renewable-fuels standard, federal crop insurance, conservation programs, free-trade agreements, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations.

“This is not an endorsement, but it is a report card, and it’s a tool to use for the farmers and for anybody, actually, who’s concerned about agriculture and where these candidates stand on their policies,” said Iowa Corn Growers Association President Kevin Ross, a corn grower from southwest Iowa.

Former Pennsylvania U.S. Senator Rick Santorum received an A-minus from the corn growers, despite his call to “get rid of all tax incentives for all energy” to level the playing field. The corn growers said they support all domestic forms of energy.

“We believe that there ought to be an all-of-the-above energy approach,” said Mindy Larsen Poldberg, the Iowa Corn Growers Association’s director of government relations. “But what we have concerns with is when candidates may support one form of energy to the exclusion of corn-based ethanol.”

The campaign of Texas Governor Rick Perry took issue with his getting an overall grade of C-minus from the corn growers, which included a D on ethanol and energy policy, and Fs for his positions on the renewable-fuels standard and ethanol infrastructure.

“While the other Republican candidates have said the ethanol subsidies need to be phased out, Governor Perry is the only candidate who supports eliminating subsidies and tax credits for all energy producers, including the oil and gas industries,” said Katherine Cesinger, state press director for the Perry campaign.

Cesinger accused other GOP candidates of having “no plan to address the inequalities in the system.” She said every industry will benefit from Perry’s tax-reform plan for 20-percent flat personal- and corporate-tax rates. Perry also supports standards for renewable fuels at the state level.

“The federal government should not be dictating ‘one-size-fits-all’ national standards to Iowa, or any other state,” she said.

Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama both received Bs on the report card. Minnesota U.S. Representative Michele Bachmann got a D-plus, while former Godfather’s Pizza CEO Herman Cain and Texas U.S. Representative Ron Paul both received Ds. The grades were based on candidate surveys, voting records, speeches, and other background information gathered on each candidate.

“Cain, for instance, he returned the survey and was extremely negative towards ag policy,” said Ross, noting that Cain also does not have a voting record. “Quite honestly, that’s how a guy ends up with low scores.”

Drew Ivers, Iowa chair of Paul’s campaign, took issue with his candidate receiving a D.

“It makes Ron looks like he’s not for agriculture when in fact, it’s just the opposite,” Ivers said. “He is, I think, clearly the strongest advocate of free-enterprise agriculture of all of the field of candidates for the Republican Party.”

Ivers, a seventh-generation farmer, said America has had a long history of government involvement in agriculture, and Paul’s basic position is to restrict government requirements. He said Paul supports renewable fuels and free trade, but not under the current regulated system. He acknowledged that Paul opposes subsidizing industries, including agriculture.

“Most farmers are very much free-enterprisers,” Ivers said. “They want to be self-reliant and self-responsible. Ron Paul really reflects the heart and soul of the American farmer. And unfortunately, I don’t think this survey reflects that.”

The Bachmann, Cain, Gingrich, and Santorum campaigns did not respond to requests by IowaPolitics.com to comment on the report card. The Romney campaign declined comment.

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