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Outlook for Energy and Implications for Irrigated Agriculture

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Agriculture uses large quantities of energy to pump groundwater for irrigation. This means the cost of energy has important implications for the industry in terms of costs and profitability. Increases in the prices of energy sources such as natural gas, electricity, liquid petroleum gas and diesel can cause economic hardship for irrigators, particularly if those increases are unanticipated. The purpose of this paper is to briefly summarize important trends in the current domestic energy situation that could have significant impacts on the future cost and availability of energy, and to show what the implications of those trends are for irrigated agriculture. The primary focus of this study will be on trends in natural gas, since natural gas is the major fuel used for irrigation in the Great Plains states.

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