



Brussels, 2nd September 2008

To: Members of the ITRE Committee of the European Parliament

Stop EU push for unsustainable biofuels

Dear MEP,

We call on you to reject the 10% target for renewable energy in the transport sector during your vote on 11 September on the draft Renewable Energy Directive.

As it stands this target would boost production of biofuels leading to significant negative environmental and social impacts. New technologies, like so-called second generation biofuels from agricultural or food waste, or electric cars, are still under development and would at best contribute in a limited way to achieving the target.

Current large scale biofuel production:

1. does not help climate protection and increases pressure on biodiversity. Precious ecosystems like tropical forests, savannahs and wetlands are converted for biofuel production. Large amounts of carbon are released from the soil and vegetation, which will only be captured again after decades or even centuries, according to recent studies^{1 2} – which will be too late to avoid dangerous climate change.
2. significantly contributes to food price increases, according to the UN³, World Bank⁴, OECD⁵ and IMF⁶. Although only a small percentage of global agricultural land is currently used for growing biofuel crops, biofuels are the fastest growing source of demand for principal food crops and this significantly increases the marginal costs of feeding a growing world population.
3. increases pressure on access to land in developing countries. Companies are already rushing to buy up land in developing countries, potentially displacing vulnerable communities⁷ and in particular placing women at risk⁸.

These negative impacts are already taking place as a result of EU and US policies.

Further to that, increasing the share of biofuels in transport would require huge public subsidies: the European Commission's Joint Research Centre estimates the economic cost of achieving the 10% target to be nearly 60 billion Euros. At the same time an optimistic estimation of the benefits (excluding the negative effect of indirect land use impacts) is in the range of 19 billion Euros (including greenhouse gas reduction, energy security and employment benefits).⁹

This negative cost-benefit ratio of 3/1 cannot justify public investments in unsustainable biofuels and is clearly a waste of tax payers' money. But more critically it would divert capacities away from promoting more effective and sustainable forms of renewable energy. It would make it more difficult to achieve an overall EU renewable target of 20% by 2020, which is an important element for responsible EU climate and energy leadership.

Therefore, we urge you to support during your vote of the ITRE Committee on 11 September:

- the binding 20% target for renewable energy by 2020 in Europe and effective rules on support policies, grid access and administrative procedures to secure its realisation;
- amendments that stop the push for biofuels (Amendment 22); and
- amendments that set robust environmental and social safeguards for all biomass used to produce energy. This includes amendments to strengthen greenhouse gas saving criteria (minimum 60%, compared to conventional fuel, Amendment 796) and to improve calculation methods (deletion of default values and inclusion of indirect land use impacts).

If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Claire Papazoglou, Regional Director of European Division of BirdLife International

John Hontelez, Secretary General, European Environment Bureau

Veerle Dossche, Bio-energy campaigner, FERN

Magda Stoczkiewicz, Director, Friends of the Earth Europe

Jorgo Riss, Greenpeace European Unit Director

Luis Morago, Head of Oxfam International's Brussels Office, Oxfam International

With the support of

Action Solidarité Tiers Monde (Luxembourg)

Amis de la Terre – Belgique (Belgium)

Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network

Bond Beter Leefmilieu - federation of the Flemish environmental movement (Belgium)

CEEweb for Biodiversity (Hungary)

Climate Alliance of European Cities with Indigenous Rainforest Peoples

FDCL - Center for Research and Documentation Chile-Latin America (Berlin/Germany)

FIAN International

FIAN Nederland (Nederland)

GM-free Ireland Network (Ireland)

GRINDA - conservation of rural values (Romania)

Natuur en Milieu (Nederland)

Quercus - Associação Nacional de Conservação da Natureza (Portugal)

Wetlands International

Contact for further information

Stefan Scheuer, mail@stefanscheuer.eu, +32 (0) 497 058 202

c/o Friends of the Earth Europe, Fax: +32 2 5375596, Rue Blanche 15, B-1050 Brussels

¹ T. Searchinger et al (2008); Use of US Croplands for Biofuels Increases Greenhouse Gases Through Emissions from Land-Use Change; *Science* 319(5867): 1238–40.

² E. Gallagher (2008); The Gallagher Review of the indirect effects of biofuels production; Renewable Fuels Agency.

³ 'Soaring Food Prices: Facts, Perspectives, Impacts and Actions Required', FAO, 2008.

⁴ D. Mitchell (2008); A Note on Rising Food Prices; World Bank 2008

⁵ Rising Food Prices; Causes and Consequences; OECD, paper prepared for the DAC High Level Meeting, 20–21 May 2008.

⁶ IMF World Economic Outlook, April 2008.

⁷ The chair of the United Nations Forum on Indigenous Issues has warned that 60 million indigenous people are at risk of being driven from their land to make way for biofuels. See: <http://mwcnnews.net/content/view/14507/235/>

⁸ International Union for the Conservation of Nature (2007); Gender and Bioenergy.

⁹ JRC (2007); Biofuels in the European Context: Facts, Uncertainties and Recommendations; JRC Working Paper, 19 December.