



for a living planet

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WWF Q&A on the report “Towards a Harmonised Sustainable Biomass Certification Scheme”

Q1. Why a report on bioenergy certification?

Large scale bioenergy developments can help us to clean up our energy sources, but can also represent a risk for the environment and for people. For example, if produced in the wrong way, bioenergy can drive deforestation, deprive indigenous people from their lands, or exacerbate water shortage in water scarce regions. The EU Institutions and several Member States have pledged to make bioenergy sourcing sustainable. The EU Commission and some Member States, such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Germany are already working on a bioenergy certification scheme. A Global Roundtable for Biofuels has also been established, with a Secretariat at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne in Switzerland. With this report, WWF hopes to inspire policy makers, NGOs, companies and other bioenergy stakeholders to work together towards a common international solution for a responsible bioenergy supply.

Q2. Who has written the report?

WWF has mandated the consultancy firm Ecofys to write the report. This report is therefore not a WWF document. However WWF considers that the system proposed by Ecofys is a credible way to guarantee the sustainability of bioenergy.

Q3. What are the main principles behind the certification scheme?

- The scheme is designed for production in Europe and for imports to Europe of bioenergy. Bioenergy includes biomass for heat and power and biofuels for transport.
- The “meta-standard” concept is central to the scheme. Instead of creating a totally new certification scheme, the EU would ask bioenergy producers and suppliers to comply with existing or upcoming standards, such as the Forest Stewardship Council or the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. By doing this, the meta-standard system would build on the existing international experience in better management practices and roundtables, with broad and international multi-stakeholder consultation.
- The three main issues covered by the scheme are: greenhouse gas balances, environmental impacts and social impacts.

Q4. Would such a system be sufficient to guarantee the sustainability of bioenergy?

No. Some impacts of bioenergy production and use, such as “displacement”, are difficult to tackle with a certification scheme. For this reason, the EU should also monitor the potential macro effects of bioenergy production, such as impacts on food prices or land use change, in the EU and elsewhere.

Q5. Why certify only bioenergy crops and not agricultural crops in general?

There is currently an opportunity to certify bioenergy products and WWF wishes to seize this opportunity. WWF is also looking, together with other partners, into the possibility to expand such a system for all kinds of crops at a later stage.

Q6. How would such a scheme be enforced?

WWF recommends to link this certification system to bioenergy support schemes. Only certified products could count towards obligations or mandates, or would be eligible for other types of support. In such a way, no bioenergy product is denied access to the EU, but the reward mechanism would only apply to sustainable production. The greenhouse gas balance calculation system would allow the consideration of real greenhouse gas savings when defining bioenergy targets, rather than expressing targets in terms of bioenergy quantities.

Credits should be given to the British government who leads the way. On the 21st of June, 2007, Secretary of State Douglas Alexander announced that the British government:

- aims to reward biofuels under the RTFO in accordance with the carbon savings that they offer from April 2010, provided that this is compatible with World Trade Organisation rules and EU Technical Standards requirements, and is consistent with the policy framework being developed by the European Commission as part of the review of the Biofuels Directive, and subject to consultation on its environmental and economic impacts
- aims to reward biofuels under the RTFO only if the feedstocks from which they are produced meet appropriate sustainability standards from April 2011, subject to the same provisos and consultation as above and subject to the development of such standards for the relevant feedstocks.
- will continue to work closely with our partners at a national, European and international level to develop robust standards for ensuring the sustainability of biofuels and to ensure that early consideration is given to the WTO implications of the UK's policy intentions.

We hope to see the same political courage coming from the other Member States and from the EU Institutions.

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