

For Immediate Release

A clear message from the South: WE WANT FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, NOT BIOFUELS

(January 7, 2007) An open letter (please see attachment) was sent yesterday to the European Parliament, The European Commission, The Governments and Citizens of The European Union, in which several networks from Latin American countries expressed their “deep concern over the policies that are probably to be adopted to favour the use and import of biofuel as an alternative to fossil fuels, whose disproportionate use is one of the main causes of global warming”.

They point out :

Increasing use of individual automobiles and their associated oil consumption as one of the main causes of global warming, and biofuels might appear to be a positive alternative. However, serious negative impacts are being experienced by the people and natural resources of the South.

Europe will never achieve self-sufficiency in the production of biofuel from national production of energy crops. The EU Biofuels directive being announced by the EU Commissioners next week, will drive a massive market expansion in biofuels in Europe that will come at the expense of lands on which the food sovereignty of Southern countries depend.

While Europeans maintain their lifestyle based on automobile culture, the population of Southern countries will have less and less land for food crops and will lose its food sovereignty. We will have to base our diet on imported food, possibly from Europe.

Energy crops grown in Latin America for the European market :

will increase the level of destruction of the rainforest in Argentina, of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil and Bolivia and of the Mata Atlântica in Brazil and Paraguay, and

genetically modified soybean crops, that are already being planted, affect the health of surrounding populations, where the levels of cancer and other diseases associated with agro toxic chemicals used on these monoculture plantations are increasing day by day.

sugar cane plantations and the production of ethanol in Brazil are the business of an agricultural monopoly using slave labour, and oil palm plantations are expanding at the expense of forests and the territories of the indigenous and other traditional communities of Colombia, Ecuador and other countries, increasingly geared to biodiesel production.

The decisions on the EU Biofuels directive being made by the EU commissioners on January 10th are critical to the future of many in the Southern nations. The Latin American networks appealed to the governments and people of the European Union

countries to seek solutions that do not worsen the already dramatic social and environmental situation of the peoples of Latin America, Asia and Africa.

Some European organizations, organized a campaign to support the Latin American Network position and also sent their own message to the Commission. The commission are urged to act to prevent further deforestation, biodiversity losses, and evictions and impoverishment of local communities by placing a moratorium on the EU biofuel targets and obligations until the sustainable sourcing of biofuels can be guaranteed; and taking all possible measures to stop imports of biofuel feedstocks for bioenergy where crop production is linked to deforestation, peat drainage, biodiversity loss, pollution or human rights abuses.

Note:

Additional information about this issues can be found in the signatories' web pages: Alert Against the Green Desert Network, <http://www.desertoverde.org/>; Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations, <http://www.wrm.org.uy/plantations/RECOMA.html>; Network for a GM free Latin America, <http://www.rallt.org/>; Oilwatch South America, <http://www.oilwatch.org/>; World Rainforest Movement, <http://www.wrm.org.uy/>;

Some good in-depth articles on the impact of biofuels to communities people, biodiversity and resources in Latin America can be found at: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin/112/viewpoint.html> on the World Rainforest Movement website.

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