
Biofuels: A Disaster in the Making

Call to immediately suspend forms of support for the import and export of biofuels - November 2006.

The undersigned NGOs, Indigenous Peoples Organizations, farmer's movements and individuals call upon the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change to immediately suspend all subsidies and other forms of inequitable support for the import and export of biofuels.

We recognize that the local production and consumption of biomass plays an important role in sustainable livelihood strategies of, in particular, rural women in developing countries. Certain small-scale and strictly regulated sustainable forms of biofuel production can be beneficial at the national level. However, the modalities of biomass consumption and production must be carefully analyzed in conjunction with communities, to introduce adaptive measures that will maintain and enhance the patterns of sustainability, while avoiding negative impacts on health and the adverse effects inherent to increases in demand or changes in socioeconomic settings. Solar energy often offers a sustainable alternative to traditional biomass.

Meanwhile, international trade in biofuels is already causing a negative impact on food sovereignty, rural livelihoods, forests and other ecosystems, and these negative impacts are expected to accumulate rapidly. Large-scale, export-oriented production of biofuel requires large-scale monocultures of trees, sugarcane, corn, oilpalm, soy and other crops. These monocultures already form the number one cause of rural depopulation and deforestation worldwide. The rapidly increasing demand for these crops as a source of biofuel will lead to:

- increased land competition leading to further land concentration, the marginalization of small-scale agriculture and the widespread conversion of forests and other ecosystems;
- arable land that is currently used to grow food being used to grow fuel, leading to staggering food prices and causing hunger, malnutrition and impoverishment amongst the poorest sectors of society;
- rural unemployment and depopulation;
- the destruction of the traditions, cultures, languages and spiritual values of Indigenous Peoples and rural communities;
- the extensive use of agro-chemicals, which deteriorate human health and ecosystems
- the destruction of watersheds and the pollution of rivers, lakes and streams;
- droughts and other local and regional climatic extremes; and
- the extensive use of genetically modified organisms leading to unprecedented risks.

These effects will have particularly a negative impact on women and Indigenous Peoples, who are economically marginalized and more dependent on natural resources like water and forests.

Biofuels are a disaster in the making. Existing legally binding standards, regulations and enforcement mechanisms in the (potential) production countries are absolutely insufficient to prevent the above-

mentioned impacts. International demand for biofuels is already surpassing supply in key countries like Malaysia and Brazil, giving an important push to the expansion of destructive crops like oil palm and sugar cane. Initiatives to produce these monocultures “responsibly” are rejected by many NGOs and social movements in the production countries themselves, who have emphasized that the above-mentioned negative social and environmental impacts are inherent to the large-scale production of monocultures.

There is nothing green or sustainable to imported or exported biofuel. Instead of destroying the lands and livelihoods of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in the South through yet another form of colonialism, we call upon Northern countries to recognize their responsibility for destroying the planet’s climate system, to reduce their energy consumption to sustainable levels, to pay the climate debt they have created by failing to do so until now and to dramatically increase investment in solar energy and sustainable wind energy.

We also call upon all governments to develop and effectively enforce environmental and social standards and regulations that ensure that national biofuel production industries do not destroy the livelihoods and ecosystems of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Corporations should be held strictly liable for any social and environmental damage that has occurred and they should be effectively prosecuted if they do not uphold environmental and labor laws.

Signed: (for additional signatures contact Global Forest Coalition, simonelovera@yahoo.com)

Global Forest Coalition

Pacific Indigenous Peoples Environment Coalition

Institute of Cultural Affairs, Ghana

Oilwatch

International alliance of Indigenous and Tribal People of the Tropical Forest

World Rainforest Movement

Global Justice Ecology Project

Friends of the Earth-Latin America and the Caribbean

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ICTI, Indonesia

Inter-Mountain Peoples’Education and Culture in Thaliand Association, Thailand

Namanga Urban Community Environmental Group, Kenya

Ethnic Minority and Indigenous Rights Organisation of Africa

Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee - East Africa

Prakuyo Community, Tanzania

Consejo Indigena Mesoamericano - CIMA

FOAG/COICA-France

Simba Maasai Outreach Organisation, Kenya

Galesa Environment Conservation Organisation, Kenya

CORE, India

Red America Latina Libre de Transgenicos

Sobrevivencia/Friends of the Earth-Paraguay

CENSAT Agua Viva/Friends of the Earth-Colombia

Friends of the Earth-Western Australia

Groundwork/ Friends of the Earth-South Africa

RAPALMIRA

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Ecological Society of the Philippines
Forest Peoples Programme, UK
Asociación Indígena Ambiental, Panama
Worldforests, Scotland
Bhartiya Kissan Union
Robin Wood, Germany
Sarhad Conservation Network, Pakistan
Centre Internationnal d'Etudes Forestières et Environnementales, Cameroon
GM Watch
REDES/ Friends of the Earth-Uruguay
SAM/Friends of the Earth Malaysia.
Onehemisphere, Sweden
WALHI/Friends of the Earth-Indonesia
KEPS/HKCA, Pakistan
Lismore Climate Action Group, Australia
Rainforest Information Centre, Australia
Biowatch, South Africa
Munlochy Vigil, Scotland
Grupo de Reflexion Rural, Argentina
Timberwatch, South Africa
Fundacion Ambiente Total del Chaco, Argentina
Corporate Europe Observatory
Costa Carrera, Chile
Agrarian group of ATTAC in Wuppertal, Germany
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Big Scrub Environment Centre, Australia
Genethics Foundation
XminY Solidarityfund, Netherlands
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PENGON/ Friends of the Earth-Palestine
Anthra, India
Yakshi , India
Andhra Pradesh Adivasi Aikya Vedika, India
Friends of the Earth- Ghana
LIFE e.V., Germany
Environmental Rights Action (ERA), Nigeria
Veterinarios sin Fronteras, España
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Friends of the Earth-Nepal
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Pembina Institute
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Lewis District Green Party
National Society for Conservationists/Friends of the Earth-Hungary
South African Climate Action Network
Safe Food Coalition, South Africa
Progressio, UK
Friends of the Oldman River, Canada
Pacific Institute of Resource Management, New Zealand
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