

Press release:

EU Parliament must say no to flawed Renewable Energy Directive which sacrifices climate, people's rights and food production to biofuel (agrofuel) production

AEFJN (Africa Europe Faith & Justice Network; Biofuelwatch (UK), Borneo Orangutan Society, Campaña "No te Comas el Mundo" (Xarxa de l'Observatori del Deute en la Globalització, Veterinaris Sense Fronteres, Xarxa de Consum Solidari Econexus (UK), ECO Yeshemachoch Mahiber (ECOYM), Grupo de Reflexion Rural (Argentina), Noah (Friends of the Earth Denmark), Rettet den Regenwald (Germany), Soya Alliance (UK), World Rainforest Movement

Social and environmental campaigners call on MEPs to vote against the Renewable Energy Directive and another directive [1] in their current form, because both would lead to major biofuel expansion. A petition [2] signed by close to 10,000 citizens over the last two weeks, calls on MEPs to vote against the Renewable Energy Directive unless biofuels are removed from it.

On Tuesday, 16th December, the European Parliament will debate the proposed renewables legislation, with a vote scheduled for the following day.

Hundreds of civil society groups, NGOs and social movements, as well as many scientists and some UN officials had called on the EU to drop the 10% biofuel target from the Renewable Energy Directive [3] because producing the biofuel to meet it will cause irreversible harm to ecosystems and the climate, to communities and to biodiversity [4].

Helena Paul of Econexus says "Europe urgently needs legislation which promotes genuinely sustainable renewable energy, such as wind and solar power, in order to help mitigate climate change. Large-scale biomass for biofuel production is not a renewable energy source. It does not belong in a renewable energy directive at all and should be removed. Millions of people face losing their land and livelihoods, even more people will be at risk of going hungry, and we can expect ecosystems to be destroyed ever faster, thus accelerating climate change".

Ana Filipini of the World Rainforest Movement adds: "The harm caused by such large-scale biofuel expansion will be of such magnitude that it cannot be outweighed by the benefits of additional wind and solar energy. It will turn the EU's 'Climate Package' into an instrument for heating the planet ever faster, whilst sacrificing the lives and livelihoods of large numbers of people in the global South. It would be a cruel irony if those who believe in genuine renewables for climate change mitigation felt they had to vote for this directive. If they do, we will all pay the price."

In September, the EU Parliament [4] agreed a series of amendments to the text to try and minimise the most serious negative impacts of biofuels, and to prevent peat from being burnt as 'renewable energy'. Most of those amendments, including on peat, have been deleted from the final text.

Guadalupe at Rettet den Regenwald states: "The 'sustainability standards' that Parliament had wanted would not have been enough to prevent disastrous impacts on climate, people and biodiversity, but it is highly alarming that many MEPs do not seem to be aware that almost all of what they thought they had won has in fact been lost from the text. The EU has boasted of leading global responses to climate change. The target for biofuels means that the EU instead risks leading the

destruction of ecosystems vital to stabilising climate. Parliament must vote against a law which is so flawed that it will discredit the EU's standing worldwide.”

ENDS

Contacts

Almuth Ernsting, Biofuelwatch: +44 -1224 324797

Helena Paul, Econexus: +44 -207 431 4357

Notes to editors

1. A vote on the new Fuel Quality Directive is due on the same day. The Fuel Quality Directive will contain a provision to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport fuel by 10%, which is worded in such a way that much of this target will be met from biofuels. The petition referred to in [2] calls on MEPs to reject the current text on the Fuel Quality Directive as well as that on the Renewable Energy Directive.
2. www.regenwald.org/international/englisch/protestaktion.php?id=338 – signature count includes the English, German, Spanish and Portuguese versions.
3. Over 200 organisations have signed a call for an EU agrofuel moratorium (www.econexus.info/biofuels.html) and large numbers of organisations from the global South have also protested against EU biofuel targets (www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/declarations.php)
4. see for example Agrofuels: Towards a Reality Check in Nine Key Areas, July 2007: written and published by 11 organisations; Report: Agrofuels and the Myth of the Marginal Lands: Preliminary report for EU decision-makers, 7 organisations, plus 1 page summary for MEPs, etc: www.econexus.info/ Analysis and Case Studies
5. The Industry, Research and Energy Committee of the European Parliament