

## **BIG GREEN LIES!**

### **Biofuels and bioenergy worsen climate change, threaten forests, biodiversity and human health, and encourage land grabs.**

Industry and governments, under the guise of addressing climate change, have provided supports and massive cash flows (subsidies etc) to promote the use of living plants – wood, crops, grasses, algae, municipal waste, manure, sewage sludge and more) as a substitute for fossil fuels. They promote refining these materials into biofuels for transportation (agrofuels), as well as biochemicals/plastics and other “bioproducts” and burning them for bioelectricity.

#### **Where will it all come from?**

This ENORMOUS demand for crops, wood and other forms of “biomass” is resulting in expanding industrial monocultures, more GMO crops and trees, synthetic microbes\*, deforestation and “land grabs” as investors cash in on these profitable new markets.

**Bioelectricity:** Burning wood for “renewable electricity” is very rapidly expanding and accounts for the bulk of growth in renewable energy in Europe and the US. The result: massive new demand and international trade in woodchips and pellets, shipped from all over the world to be burned. Burning wood for electricity is inefficient (most facilities operate around 25% efficiency, and require about 13,000 tons of wood per megawatt/yr of electricity generated), releases more CO<sub>2</sub> per unit of energy even than burning coal or natural gas. The “carbon neutral” claim - that trees will regrow and re-absorb carbon released when they are burned is misleading: Trees can be burned in minutes, and yet take decades to regrow. Meanwhile we will dump more, not less CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. Overharvesting depletes nutrients and inhibits regrowth. Burning wood causes ongoing air pollution: Nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides and particulates, especially “nanoparticulates” which enter the lungs and directly into bloodstream, causing asthma, cardiopulmonary disease, premature births, cancer and more. Renewable energy should not harm peoples health!

**Biofuels** including corn and sugar cane ethanol, soy and palm oil biodiesel, continue to expand, in spite of numerous studies demonstrating their failure to reduce emissions, the negative impacts on biodiversity and human rights, and their role in worsening hunger. Al Gore recently pronounced his support for ethanol a “huge mistake”. Yet now the US military is promoting the use of various biofuels for “energy security” – the US military is the largest single consumer of oil on the planet.

**Biochar** (fine grained charcoal made from burning biomass), is being promoted as an offset for pollution, for example to “offset” the emissions from Canadian tar sands extraction, and also as a “climate geoengineering” technology. Yet there is little basis for assuming that biochar will provide any of the claimed benefits, and good reason to assume that massive new demand for plant material will worsen problems. Proponents have called for more than 550 million hectares of land to be converted to produce feedstock for biochar production. Whose land?

*Land grabs and human rights violations are already underway as investors seek to profit from new markets, growing industrial monoculture tree plantations, genetically engineered crops and trees to satisfy all these demands.*

#### **For more information:**

- >Biofuelwatch: <http://biofuelwatch.net> (reports and resources on biofuels, bioelectricity, biochar)
- >ETC Group: <http://etcgroup.org> (reports: “The New Biomassers”, and “Extreme Genetic Engineering”)
- >Energy Justice Network: <http://energyjustice.org> (factsheets on biomass and other “dirty energy”)
- >Global Justice Ecology Project: <http://globaljusticeecology.org> (\*\*Stop GE Trees Campaign)
- >GRAIN: <http://www.grain.org> (see resources on land grabs: [www.farmlandgrab.org](http://www.farmlandgrab.org) and agrofuels)