

CALL ON THE EU TO ABANDON 10% BIOFUEL TARGET

THOMSEN REPORT (A6- 0287/2007 - ITRE): “A ROADMAP FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY IN EUROPE”, 26th SEPTEMBER VOTE (24th SEPTEMBER DEBATE)

The undersigned organisations call on the European Parliament to drop support for the proposed 10% target for biofuel use in the transport sector (point 43, Thomsen report) and to support amendments to this effect.

Growing and compelling evidence suggests that this target will further contribute to highly destructive impacts on the climate, biodiversity, communities and food security. The 10% target should be dropped, and the sustainability of the agrofuels now used to meet the current indicative target (5,75% by 2010) should be investigated.

PROBLEMS WITH BIOFUELS

Biofuels cannot solve the problem of GHG emissions in transport: Most biofuels are produced from large-scale monocultures and accelerate global warming by speeding up the destruction of forests, peatlands, healthy soils and other ecosystems which are carbon sinks and which help to regulate the climate. Biofuel monocultures promote ecosystem destruction both directly and by displacement of other activities. Social impacts include increased rural depopulation, health impacts, land conflicts and human rights violations. Neither certification nor life cycle analysis can take account of these impacts. Right now, Paraguay is experiencing its worst fires on record. Most of the fires have been set to clear land, much of it for soya, since the growing demand for biofuels has pushed up soya prices. Furthermore, the threat from biofuels to food security is a real one and will get worse as global warming together with greater land-use for biofuels combine to further reduce food supplies.

We cannot rely on second and third generation biofuels: The recent OECD report makes it clear that major technological obstacles remain that may not be overcome in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, the safety of those technologies, which will rely heavily on genetic engineering and synthetic biology, has not been assessed. Also, since most second-generation biofuels are expected to be cellulose based, this is likely to spur the expansion of large scale tree plantations in the South, no less damaging than first generation biofuel crops.

SUSTAINABILITY CRITERIA CANNOT SOLVE THOSE PROBLEMS

We are glad to see sustainability concerns remain at the center of the Parliament's attention. In March, the EU Heads of State made clear they would only endorse a mandatory 10% target if the sustainability of the biofuels could be guaranteed. Current proposals by the European Commission and several EU member states on this issue, however, do not provide any such guarantee. Criteria and life cycle analyses cannot address impacts like displacement. In addition, the European Commission proposal ignores all social and most environmental concerns. No solutions for displacement and acceleration of climate feedbacks are considered. The question as to how much biomass can be sustainably sourced for biofuels without causing harm to ecosystems, the climate, communities and food production has not been addressed. Draft plans from the UK and the Netherlands only involve mandatory reporting for the coming years, without repercussions for bad practice.

FUEL QUALITY DIRECTIVE

We would also like to draw the attention of MEPs to the Fuel Quality Directive, which goes to the Environment Committee in November. The deadline for amendments is October 2nd and we urge MEPs to be aware that the **low carbon fuel targets, or ‘greenhouse gas reduction targets’** proposed in this Directive are effectively biofuel targets, as made clear by Stavros Dimas who, when publishing the draft Directive said: [this will] “open the way for a major expansion in the use of biofuels.” Liquid fossil fuels will inevitably become more carbon-intensive and more polluting as the most easily accessible oil is depleted. No legislation about ‘greenhouse gas reduction from fuels’ can change this fact. The only way of cutting our transport emissions is demand reduction – this means reducing levels of individual road transport as well as mandatory fuel efficiency standards.

We will be writing to you shortly at greater length about this directive (Brussels, 31 January 2007 COM(2007) 18 and the draft report PROVISIONAL 2007/0019(COD) that seek to amend Directive 98/70/EC.

The undersigned organisations urge the Parliament to reject the 10% biofuels target and to send a clear signal to the Commission that the current plans about ‘sustainability criteria’ are very far from acceptable.

Signatories:

- + Grupo de Reflexion Rural Europe, Stella Semino
- + Munlochy Vigil, UK, Anthony Jackson
- + Biofuelwatch, UK, Almuth Ernsting

- + Robin Wood, Germany, Peter Gerhardt
- + Ecologistas en Accion, Spain, Tom Kucharz
- + Rettet den Regenwald, Germany, Reinhard Behrend
- + NOAH - FoE Denmark, Bente Hessellund Andersen
- + Econexus, Helena Paul
- + Carbon Trade Watch, Tamra Gilberton
- + Watch Indonesia, Marianne Klute
- + Corporate Europe Observatory, Nina Holland
- + Arbeitsgruppe Schweiz Kolumbien (Swiss Working Group on Colombia), Switzerland, Stephan Suhner,
- + Earle Bingley
- + Down to Earth, UK, Liz Chidley
- + GMO Information Centre, Romania, Ramona Dumnicioiu
- + Ecoropa, Christine von Weizsäcker
- + Centre for Orangutan Protection / COP, Indonesia, Hardi Baktiantoro
- + Rainforest Information Centre, Australia, John Seed
- + Bruno-Manser-Fonds, Basel / Switzerland, Lukas Straumann
- + Borneo Resources Institute (BRIMAS), Malaysia, Mark Bujang
- + GDOHP (No to GMOs Platform), Turkey, Arca Atay
- + Freunde der Naturvölker e.V., Germany, Steffen Keulig
- + Catholic Concern for Animals, Deborah Jones
- + Scottish Wildlife Trust, UK, Jonathan Hughes
- + Medact, UK, Marion Birch
- +GLOBAL 2000/Friends of the Earth Austria, Jens Karg
- + Gaia Foundation, UK, Teresa Anderson
- + GM Freeze, UK, Pete Riley
- + Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker GfV, Germany, Yvonne Bangert
- + Borneo Orangutan Survival INTERNATIONAL, Robert K. Schmidt

[Additional signatures added after the letter was sent to MEPs:

- + Friends of the Earth Sweden
- + Xàrxa de l'Observatori del Deute en la Globalització (Catalonia, Spanish State), Mónica Vargas
- + autofrei leben! e.V., Germany
- + KAHEA: The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance, Hawaii
- + Fundación Puntos Verdes, Ecuador, Heike Brieschke
- + Dr. Sandra Altherr, PRO WILDLIFE e.V., München, Germany
- + Brigitte Kunze, Aktionsgemeinschaft Solidarische Welt (ASW) e.V., Germany]

Further information

OPEN LETTER: WE CALL ON THE EU TO ABANDON TARGETS FOR BIOFUEL USE IN EUROPE, 31 January 2007

<http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2007Jan31-openletterbiofuels.pdf>

Call for an immediate moratorium on EU incentives for agrofuels, EU imports of agrofuels and EU agroenergy monocultures <http://www.econexus.info/biofuels.html>

Agrofuels - Towards a reality check in nine key areas - Biofuelwatch, Carbon Trade Watch/TNI, Corporate Europe Observatory, Econexus, Ecoropa, Grupo de Reflexión Rural, Munlochy Vigil, NOAH (Friends of the Earth Denmark), Rettet Den Regenwald and Watch Indonesia <http://tinyurl.com/233x7n>