

Press release

-for immediate release-

'Ecological Macbeth' warning over new biofuel incentives

Biofuelwatch, January 24th 2007

As George Bush announces an alternative fuels obligation of 35 billion gallons by 2017, campaigners warn of ecological catastrophe as central ecological goals are thrown to the wind. Non-petroleum fuels are being promoted in a manner and extent which casts aside essential principles of rainforest protection and cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

A new report¹ on the palm oil industry, written by Marianne Klute of Watch Indonesia, reveals that Indonesia plans a 43-fold increase in its palm oil production by 2025, in the process bringing the total area converted to oil palms in Indonesia, mostly from rainforest, to over 26 million hectares - an area larger than the United Kingdom².

Central to these plans is the surging world market for palm oil use in biodiesel, encouraged by rising crude oil prices and additionally, deliberate incentives for its use. This month, EU president Jose Manuel Barroso unveiled plans for a binding 10% of Europe's vehicle fuels to be biofuels by 2020, with no commitment to ecologically-guided controls on imports. The cheapest large-scale feedstock for biodiesel (which replaces diesel) is palm oil, and European biofuel incentives have already strongly influenced palm growers' plans³.

The Indonesian expansion of oil palms and other plantations threatens to lay waste virtually all the country's mainly forest peatlands⁴, and with it the release of up to 50 billion tonnes of carbon, equivalent to six years of global fossil fuel emissions.

Biofuelwatch co-founder Jim Roland said, "What we see being played out is 'ecological Macbeth', in which basic environmental objectives are being betrayed and savaged by Western leaders' pat solutions."

Jutta Kill, UK director of FERN, the forest conservation lobby group, said "These huge targets are being drawn up without a clear comprehension of where all the land needed to grow so much biofuel is going to come from, and what the full consequences will be."

Notes:

1. Green Gold Biodiesel: Players in Indonesia by Marianne Klute
www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/Green_Gold_Biodiesel_%20Players_in_Indonesia.doc
2. UK surface area is 24,482,000 hectares.
3. See sg.biz.yahoo.com/060224/15/3yy2x.html (Dow Jones Newswires)
4. Assesment of CO2 emissions from drained peatlands in South-east Asia, report pp12-13, www.wetlands.org/publication.aspx?ID=51a80e5f-4479-4200-9be0-66f1aa9f9ca9

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