

PRESS RELEASE 23 January 2008

Renewables Directive: agrofuel target is 'irresponsible and unsustainable'

The European Commission's draft EU Renewable Energy Directive, published today, ignores numerous recent warnings on the environmental and social damage of its proposed 10 per cent target for agrofuel use in the transport sector by 2020.

EU member states had demanded that the 10 per cent target be met 'sustainably', but the EU Joint Research Centre and the UK Parliament Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) have expressed strong doubts that this can be achieved. The EAC has also argued for a moratorium on agrofuel targets.

A coalition of civil society groups have consistently called for the target to be scrapped and for the EU to implement a moratorium on targets and other incentives for agrofuel expansion.

"The European Commission's failure to act on the many warnings is shockingly irresponsible," says Nina Holland of Corporate Europe Observatory, a lobby watchdog group based in the Netherlands.

"Now it is up to the EU governments and the European Parliament to ensure that the EU's 10 per cent target for agrofuels is dropped and that a moratorium is introduced on all targets and incentives for agrofuels and agro-energy," says Helena Paul of Econexus, a public interest research organisation based in the UK.

"The sustainability criteria proposed by the European Commission exclude vital factors such as large scale water extraction, soil erosion, land conflicts, human rights and labour conditions of workers. Moreover, they can't deal with macro-level impacts such as displacement and increased food prices," says Stella Semino of Grupo de Reflexión Rural (Argentina).

There are several other major flaws with the draft Directive. For example, all agrofuels produced in installations that were already operational in January 2008 will be exempted from even those few criteria that the Commission poses until 2013. The Directive is also limited in its scope to covering only 'biofuels' and 'bioliquids', but not solid biomass such as wood or palm kernel.

A more detailed media briefing highlighting the major flaws in the draft directive, and drawing attention to recent criticisms of the EU agrofuel target, can be found at:

www.tni.org/detail_page.phtml?act_id=17839

Numerous calls have been made internationally for a moratorium on the expansion and international trade of agrofuels. These can be found at: www.biofuelwatch.org

Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network
Biofuelwatch
Corporate Europe Observatory
Grupo de Reflexion Rural
Econexus
Ecoropa
GM Freeze (UK)
Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations
Munlochy Vigil
Rettet den Regenwald (Germany)
Salva la Selva (Ecuador)
Transnational Institute
World Rainforest Movement

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