

The SoyAlliance



26 June 2008

To: Members of the Environment Committee of the European Parliament

7 July vote: Agrofuel target must be dropped - sustainability cannot be guaranteed

Dear MEP,

In light of the upcoming vote in the Environment Committee on the Renewables Directive on July 7th, **we urgently call on you to reject the 10% agrofuel target.** This target will form a major incentive for the expansion of monoculture plantations world wide, with growing poverty and environmental degradation as its consequence. Car efficiency standards, voted on later this year, should not be weakened in exchange for more agrofuel use - as the Commission has now proposed.

The sustainability of the agrofuels needed to meet the target cannot be guaranteed, since sustainability criteria cannot deal with indirect impacts like displacement, causing deforestation and social conflicts over natural resources, and growing food prices. Whereas many now see the problems associated with palm oil and soy oil, others still believe that sugar cane ethanol is better - despite the current deforestation rates in Brazil, leading to Brazil's Environment Minister Marina Silva to resign, and despite the inhumane labour conditions.¹

Some of the industry-NGO certification initiatives are highly controversial, such as the Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS), and the rudimentary 'Better Sugarcane Initiative' (BSI) that is promoted by some to set standards for 'better' sugar cane production. Both initiatives lack legitimacy and representation from small producers or labourers. The RTRS has provoked several counter-conferences and demonstrations in Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, and declarations and calls for civil society organisations to withdraw from this platform.²

Already three years in the making, the Better Sugarcane Initiative has yet to publish a single draft concerning its standards. Furthermore, voting rights and access to the steering committee can be obtained by paying the amount of 25,000 euros. Zero stakeholders from civil society organizations, labor unions, or local communities can be counted among its members, showing BSI's very unrepresentative nature.

¹Agrofuels in Brazil; Fact Finding Mission report on the impacts of agrofuel expansion on the enjoyment of social rights of rural workers, indigenous peoples and peasants in Brazil. www.fian.org

²See for a list of declarations and press releases: <http://www.corporateeurope.org/agrofuels.html>

The expansion driven by agrofuel demand will out do any supposed positive impacts of certification. These certification initiatives, that have now allowed oil and energy companies membership, will legitimise this expansion and therefore actively contribute to the damage.

We are also concerned that this directive will lead to strong support for so-called second generation agrofuels, which will lead to massive new demand for monoculture tree plantations to produce cellulose. These plantations are a notorious source of social and environmental conflicts in countries like Brazil.

We therefore call on you to vote 7th July to drop the mandatory 10% agrofuel target. Even lower percentages would still promote current unsustainable agrofuel production.

Yours sincerely,

The SoyAlliance - Anthony Jackson

Corporate Europe Observatory - Nina Holland

Xarxa de l'Observatori del Deute en la Globalització - Mónica Vargas

Ecologistas en Acción, Spain - Tom Kucharz

Plataforma Rural, Spain - Jerónimo Aguado

Verdegaia, Spain - Begoña Cerrera Ríos

Biofuelwatch, UK - Almuth Ernsting