



WECF Position Paper 2: Safe Food and Sustainable Rural Development

Sustainable "bio"-fuels in the context of "food or fiber"

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WECF mission

Women in Europe for a Common Future - WECF strives for a Healthy Environment for All. We enhance women's potential to balance environment, health and economy. Our activities are based on our partners' visions and needs. Therefore WECF implements solutions locally and influences policy internationally.

WECF's global goal for 2010-15:

Regarding safe food and sustainable rural development WECF will increase access to local, safe, sustainable and fairly priced food, as well as increasing rural incomes and wellbeing. WECF promotes agro biodiversity, strengthening cooperation between farmers, consumers, supermarket, bakers, beekeepers, hotels and restaurants and local policy makers for local traditional produce which protects agro-biodiversity and people's health, as well as creating sustainable economic development. WECF advocates for legislation and international agreements which promote agro-biodiversity protection and sustainable farming and phasing-out the use of GMOs and hazardous pesticides.

This goal implies that:

- Everyone has the right to have access to safe and affordable food. This is not yet the case. Currently about 1 billion people are facing food shortages, unaffordable food prices and in many cases, hunger. Global grain reserves are declining, and prices are skyrocketing. There are many underlying factors for the ongoing food-crisis, from bad harvests due to climate change, unjust distribution of food, the global increase in meat consumption to the growing *diversion of grain to fuel cars*.
- We cannot solve the climate crisis and parallel accept (or even effect) a dramatic rise of the current food and biodiversity crisis.
- Sustainable use of biomass for energy must go hand in hand with food security and biodiversity protection by applying strict environmental and social criteria. Where this is not the case, biofuels might do more harm than good.

WECF position concerning „bio“-energy

Renewable energies must be produced sustainably. Increasingly criticism is heard about „bio“-mass energy not being sustainable, having a negative impact on health and environment. In the following part, we take a stand on liquid „bio“-mass, used as fuels in the transport sector. We use the word „bio“-mass with quotation marks, because in many countries of the EU the prefix bio is associated with 'organic' food, thus as something good. This positive association is misleading when the energy sector refers to "bio"-mass.

WECF's position

concerning „bio“-fuels

„Bio“-fuels are predominantly agricultural products, therefore also agrofuels is often used to describe them. „Bio“-fuels comprise „bio“-ethanol, „bio“-diesel, pure vegetable oil, as well as „bio“-fuels of the so-called second generation.

The advantages of „bio“-fuels:

- They are renewable
- They can be produced locally and used regionally and can thus strengthen the regional economy.
- They can contribute to climate change mitigation (positive life cycle assessment).

However, there are also major problems:

- In terms of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions the life cycle assessment of „bio“-diesel is often not positive
- Compared to petrol, „bio“-ethanol can reach negative and at the same time positive outcomes of up to 90% GHG saving, depending on the respective feedstock and conversion technology.
- „Bio“-fuel production often seriously competes with food production and nature conservation, raising food prices and increasing death from undernutrition. Currently more than 1 bn. people are undernourished, more than in 1970, and the risen demand for "bio"-fuels is one of the reasons.

Risks of international „bio“-fuel trade

„Bio“-fuels will often compete for land with other uses, such as food production. To meet the needs of our mobile society, transport accounts for 14% of

the worldwide "bio"-fuel demand, and for more than 30% of the EU demand. To meet the climate change mitigation goals and to reduce GHG emissions, the EU Renewable Energy Directive sets out a long term vision for renewable energy sources. It establish a binding target of 20% for renewable energy's share of energy consumption in the EU by 2020, and a binding 10% target for the share of renewable energy in transport petrol and diesel. However, due to its limited arable areas the EU targets will depend on a high share of "bio"-fuel imports, which bring export opportunities for developing countries, but more importantly major risks, such as unsustainable production of "bio"-fuels (example palm oil from burned peat forests), and increasing stable food prices for the poor.

Therefore, WECF only supports the production and utilization of „bio“-fuels under strict conditions:

1. The EU and other governments should prioritize targets for reduced and efficient energy consumption:
 - Strategies for reduction of transportation
 - Strategies for reduction of energy and innovation of technical design in the transport and industry sector
 - Increased energy diversification by making use of all feasible energy efficiency and energy saving options
2. EU and other governments should set high sustainability standards for energy crops and trees. The EU and other governments should develop minimum environmental standards for the production of "bio"fuels. These standards should aim at:
 - No land - food competition
 - No (peat) forest clearing for "bio"-fuel plantations
 - Protection of natural habitats
 - No convergence of set-aside lands and permanent grasslands respectively
 - Limitation of one feedstock type by a maximum of 50% (e.g. silo maize) in biogas plants
 - Full life cycle assessment of feedstock must be seized and valued
 - Optimising „bio“-fuel use with regard to GHG emissions avoidance

- Small- and middle-scale cultivation, regional consumption
- Mixed-crop cultivation
- Crop rotation schemes
- Site-adapted energy crops
- Annual humus stocktaking
- Ecologically sound agriculture
- Local nutrient budget and erosion risk assessments
- No decrease in (agro)-biodiversity
- No increase in ecological stress on water- and land resources
- No GMOs (genetically modified organisms)

3. EU and other governments should also incorporate social criteria, including land rights:
 - Development of mandatory 'certification schemes', which defines all impacts in the producer countries, on human rights, land rights and participation rights
 - Support mechanisms for the implementation of sustainability standards in the producer countries
 - Full stakeholder involvement (including indigenous and local communities) with their full prior and informed consent

- Installation of a conflict management mechanism in Europe
- Subsidizing „bio“-energy principally on the user side.

WECF recommends an international moratorium for "bio"-fuels, until it can be shown that the targets of the EU can be met in a truly sustainable manner, taking into account the latest science and evidence on direct and indirect environmental and social impacts of "bio"-fuel policy. The entire biomass chain must be considered including transportation and storage, type of biomass production and processing, chain of custody and trading conditions. Till then, WECF recommends that the EU, as well as individual EU member states, stop immediately the trade of „bio“-fuels which have not been produced under strictest sustainability standards. Consequently, WECF calls on all national governments especially of the EU, to appoint sustainable (including social standards) criteria, concerning all „bio“-mass relevant production and processing steps by the end of 2010.

State of affairs:

This Position Paper was discussed and developed with our members and partners on following opportunities:

*Jan. 06 WECF/UNSER LAND International Women Workshop Fürstenfeldbruck, Germany
May 07 CSD 15, New York, USA*

*Oct. 07 WAVE/UNDP Environment for Europe 6th Ministerial Conference Belgrad, Serbia
Dec. 07 UNFCCC COP 13, Bali, Indonesia*

Jan. 08 2nd International Biomass Conference Graz, Austria

December 09 Update by WECF biodiversity and sustainable rural development coordinators



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