BIOENERGY
a carbon accounting time bomb

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BirdLife INTERNATIONAL

EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU

TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT

Bioenergy

20% Renewables (12% biomass!)

+

10% renewables in transport (mostly biofuels)

Why are we concerned?

Potentially severe implications for biodiversity, vulnerable human populations... and the climate!

- Area: 73-276 Mha to satisfy global biofuels demand (IFPRI) / 20-30Mha for EU biofuels target (Eickhout)
- Water: E.g. 1271 liters of water / 1 liter of Ethanol
- Wood demand: shortfall by 2030: 240 Million m3
- Land conflicts: E.g. Tana River Delta - Kenya, Mabira - Uganda, Dakatcha Woodland IBA - Kenya

Current policy is based on a myth

Bioenergy is not carbon neutral

Current accounting is flawed: C not counted either at tail-pipe or on the land

You can fiddle the accounting, but not reality:

- ILUC
- carbon debt

Implications

- selling a climate problem as a climate solution
- accepting environmental, social and economic costs out of proportion with benefits

The risks

- Potential loss of all world forests and grasslands by 2065 due to bioenergy policies (Science 2009)
- Massive biodiversity loss
- Land conflicts
- Increase in GHG emissions

The EU response up to now

Sustainability criteria for biofuels and bioliquids...

- deal with direct land use change
- BUT riddled with loopholes: grandfathering, default values, waste definition, forest definition
- AND made almost irrelevant as ILUC is being ignored

=> ILUC modelling - unrealistic assumptions and lack of transparency

The EU response up to now (2)

Biomass- flawed impact assessment and more wishful thinking

No sustainability requirement on other biomass

All bioenergy considered carbon neutral in other policy tools (e.g. ETS)

So should we be against bioenergy?

NO… BUT:

- Bioenergy is not carbon neutral,
- biomass is a scarce resource and
- extracting it from ecosystems has an environmental price.

We need to:

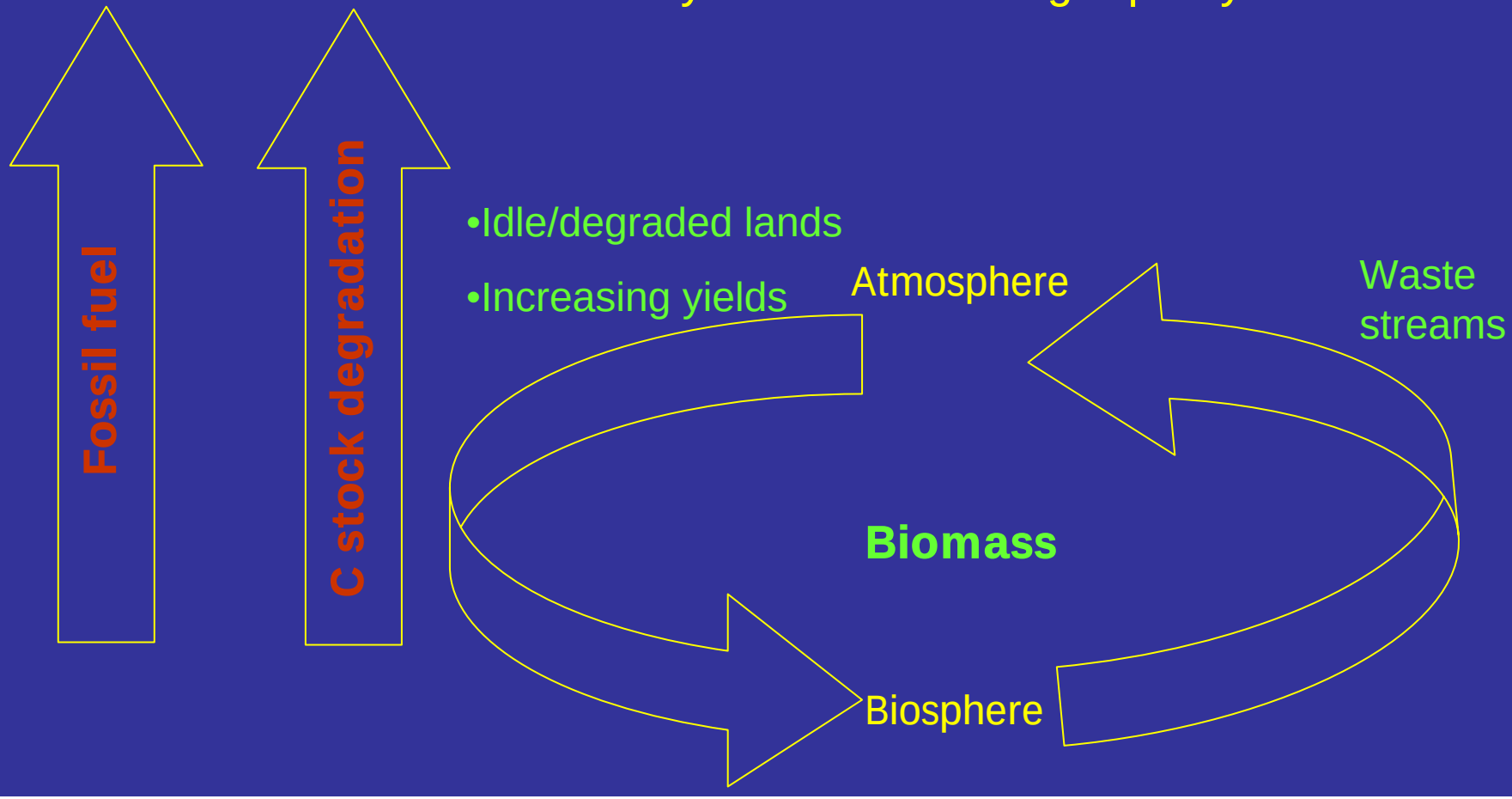
- Match ambition to sustainable potential
- Put in place policies to orient bioenergy development toward sustainable paths
- Most efficient use of biomass (material use, soil improvement) again linked to sustainable potential
- Build strong sustainability standards for all feedstocks and technologies
- Use biomass (and land) in the most efficient possible way

Back to basics

how the carbon cycle works

We can get significant amounts of bioenergy...

BUT only if we have the right policy incentives



Potential win-wins?


Trees Robijns


P1r_flickr


Umberto Salvagnin


Pierre Commenville


Mark Thurman

A way forward?

- Efficiency, efficiency, efficiency!
- Proper carbon accounting
- ILUC factors and ILUC exemptions
- Biomass sustainability standards
- Investment in positive solutions and not in negative or uncertain ones
- Decarbonisation of transport fuels (abandon the 10% target)
- Try to sort out the LULUCF quagmire

Keep the ecosystem in mind!

It is not just about carbon accounting!

Thank you for your attention

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