Producing biofuels without increasing greenhouse gas emissions

Title
A recent report about the Dutch biofuels market, compiled by research institute CE Delft, reveals that the environmental performance of biofuels sold on the Dutch market could be significantly improved by shifting to biofuels that produce low levels of CO2 emissions. The study illustrates how much Europe can gain by moving away from biofuels produced through indirect land use change (ILUC), the unintended consequence of releasing more carbon emissions due to land-use changes induced by the expansion of croplands for biofuel production. Companies using biofuels with a high ILUC-factor (mainly biodiesel from rapeseed), such as Esso, emit on average more CO2 emissions than when using fossil fuels. In contrast, companies that instead chose to produce biofuels using feed-stocks, which has a low ILUC-factor, achieved an average of almost 75% less GHG emissions. Moreover, almost 25% of the biofuels sold in the Netherlands in 2011 were based on wastes and residues, a percentage which is much higher than in most other EU Member States.

This atypical and low-ILUC biofuel mix can likely be explained by specifics of the Dutch market but also by the fact that the Netherlands is one of the only two European countries with transparency rules in place. The study suggests that other European countries that follow the Netherlands' as well as the UK's lead advocate now for more transparency on the type of biofuels they use and that the European Commission ensures that the data becomes available in all Member States. BirdLife Europe's EU Agriculture and Bioenergy Policy Officer, Trees Robijns, concluded: *"It is a great shame that currently only two countries out of 27 have transparency rules in place. As it stands we risk multi-national companies shifting their more environmentally damaging biofuels to countries that do not have reporting obligations in place."*

The report, which was commissioned by BirdLife Europe, the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Natuur & Milieu and Transport & Environment (T&E), was released at a crucial time when the European Council and Parliament were discussing the Commission's Renewable Energy Directive 2020 proposal. If the necessary changes are not made to this proposal, it will lead to an explosion in the use of biofuels in Europe, especially in the transport sector and it would subsequently lead to an increase in CO2 emissions. BirdLife Europe, the European Environmental Bureau, Natuur & Milieu and Transport & Environment advocate for the inclusion of ILUC factors in biofuels' sustainability criteria so that drivers will not be forced to fill up their cars with unsustainable biofuels. The organisations see transparency as an

important element to improve policy and buying behaviour and therefore ask that EU renewables policies are made more transparent. For more information contact Trees Robijns, EU Agriculture and Bioenergy Policy Officer at BirdLife Europe