

As EU takes step forward on biofuels, NGOs ask for fundamental reform of all bioenergy policies

Brussels, 28 April 2015

Today the European Parliament confirmed the deal that was agreed between the EU negotiators two weeks ago limiting the amount of crop-based biofuels that can count towards renewable energy targets in 2020.

The vote ends seven years of political wrangling and marks a breakthrough in the EU's approach to biofuels. Combined with the previous decision [1] to end subsidies for first generation biofuels after 2020, today's decision sends a clear signal to industry that there is no future in the sort of harmful biofuels that have been promoted for the last 15 years. The EU now has an opportunity to support better solutions for the transport sector such as energy efficiency, sustainable advanced (waste-based) biofuels and renewable electricity.

Beyond transport, the EU will need to fundamentally redesign its policy on bioenergy for 2030. Ten NGOs [published today a paper](#) highlighting key policy changes needed to promote sustainable bioenergy practices and avoid further negative impacts by bioenergy and a repeat of the biofuels fiasco. These include a cap on all bioenergy in the renewable energy mix coupled to environmental safeguards and an end to the zero accounting of carbon emissions from bioenergy.

Faustine Defossez from the EEB reacted: *"Today's vote sends an important signal: first generation biofuels are not needed in the future of our transport policy. But plenty more remains to be done: despite today's landmark decision, severe negative impacts of certain kinds of bioenergy use remain unsolved. It is the whole EU bioenergy policy that needs to be well thought through and handled with care in the future to ensure that it delivers for people, climate and the environment."*

While EU policy will now stop supporting land-hungry biofuels such as biodiesel from oilseed rape and palm oil, nothing is being done to address other issues such as the mushrooming use of maize for biogas production and the unsustainable harvesting and burning of wood from natural forests for electricity generation.

Sustainable forms of bioenergy use can make a significant contribution to mitigating climate change as part of the future renewable energy mix and should be actively promoted under a post 2020 EU renewable policy [2]. However, it is important to recognize and respect the physical limitations, inherent in the amount of land, forest and other sources of biomass, on how much bioenergy can be produced sustainably.

Sini Eräjää from BirdLife Europe and the EEB concluded *"We must avoid repeating the mistake made with first generation biofuels. The EU must limit the use of all bioenergy to what can be produced sustainably, in order to guarantee a balance between our needs for food, materials and energy and the need to preserve the health of our ecosystems."*

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[NGO recommendations: the role of bioenergy in the EU climate and energy policy post 2020](#)

For further information see EUbioenergy.com, **new website** exploring the limits of sustainable bioenergy in Europe.

[1] EU [Guidelines on State aid for environmental protection and energy 2014-2020](#), published in 2014 stated “operating aid to food-based biofuels can only be granted until 2020”.

[2] Promising examples are community managed district heating systems that use locally sourced sustainable biomass, saving energy costs and empowering local communities. The efficient sustainable use of small-scale bioenergy in rural communities, carried out in a way that enhances biodiversity and resilience, should be supported.