Press release | 17.10.2012

Biofuels, emissions and land use

Commission proposals fail to fully address climate damage of biofuels

The European Commission today presented proposals for adapting EU legislation relating to biofuels to take account of the excess greenhouse gas emissions resulting from indirect land use change (1). The Greens regretted that the Commission succumbed to the biodiesel lobby and omitted to factor in ILUC in current legislation (2) thereby failing to fully address the climate damaging impact. Commenting on the proposals, Green energy spokesperson **Claude Turmes** said:

"It is high time that the Commission set out proposals for dealing with the indirect impact of biofuel production given the substantial climate change damage and food price impact resulting from this. While we welcome the proposals to impose limits on first generation biofuels, this only addresses one side of the coin. The failure to take account of the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from indirect land use change as part of the greenhouse gas savings threshold under the EU's renewable energy legislation is a major shortcoming and no more than a sop to the biofuel industry. This is made worse by the fact that the Commission even acknowledges that ILUC means that many first generation biofuels are worse than conventional oil-based fuel. We will seek to redress this when parliament considers the proposals."

Green climate and environment spokesperson **Bas Eickhout** added:

"With climate change having already added pressure on global food supply and food prices, the EU should not be further exacerbating these trends by promoting the use of agricultural land for fuel. The 5% cap on the use of food-crop based biofuels is therefore certainly a step in the right direction. However, having ILUC factors purely for reporting, without any impact for targets under the EU fuel quality directive or sustainability criteria greenhouse gas saving threshold is a major failure. This would mean Europe's biofuel demand could continue to accelerate the destruction of tropical rainforests. The Commission does too little to help steer future investments in a sustainable direction. This glaring omission must be corrected."

(2) Under EU legislation on renewable energy and fuel quality, adopted in 2008, the European Commission was tasked to set out proposals for taking account of indirect land use change when calculating the net greenhouse gas reduction resulting from different biofuels. In principle, only biofuels delivering significant emissions reductions are supposed to be counted under EU rules on renewables.

(1) Indirect land use change (ILUC) refers to the greenhouse gas emissions arising when crops formerly used for food are converted to use for biofuel production, leading to additional emissions from land converted to enable the displaced food crop to be cultivated.

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Claude Turmes

Member

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