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Press release | 11.09.2013

Biofuels, land use and climate

EP takes tentative step to addressing flaws in EU biofuels policy but problems remain and rules delalyed

The European Parliament today voted on legislative proposals on biofuels, aimed at curbing the negative impact on the climate associated with indirect land use change (ILUC) due to biofuel production. The Greens welcomed the vote to ensure that the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from changes in land use will be accounted for under the EU's fuel quality directive. However, the group cautioned that the outcome will not fully address the flaws associated with the production of biofuels and displacement of food production. MEPs also voted by a narrow majority against starting negotiations with the Council, meaning the legislation will now go to a second reading. After the vote, Green climate spokesperson **Bas Eickhout** said:

"The European Parliament has today taken a tentative step towards addressing the negative climate impact of land-based biofuels. Ensuring that the emissions resulting from indirect land use change are accounted for under the fuel quality directive from 2020 onwards will help ensure the EU is not promoting the use of biofuels that clearly have a negative climate impact. This would help steer investors and the fuel industry away from bad biofuels in the medium-term. However, regrettably, a narrow majority voted against starting negotiations with the Council to conclude this legislation. This will further delay the urgently needed action to tackle climate-damaging biofuels.

"The result on ILUC is, however, also undermined by the failure to include emissions resulting from indirect land use change in the calculation of the greenhouse gas savings limit for biofuels under the EU's renewables directive. This contradictory vote ignores the overwhelming evidence that Europe's biofuel consumption is leading to the destruction of tropical rainforests, with major greenhouse gas implications. There will consequently be no guarantee that land-based biofuels perform better than conventional oil-based fuels in the near future.

"It is also seriously disappointing that Parliament voted to allow a 6% share of land-based biofuels like food crops in the overall fuel mix. Feeding crops into cars has fuelled rising food prices and rainforest destruction and the EU should not be further exacerbating these trends by promoting the use of agricultural land for fuel. We should be shunning the use of food crops for fuel altogether but this 6% 'cap' is clearly too high. It is highly questionable why the EU should continue promoting biofuels without putting essential climate safeguards in place."

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