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Press release | 04.10.2011

Tar sands

Commission proposal to clamp down on fuel from environment-damaging tar sands welcomed

The European Commission today presented proposals to account for the life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions from oil from tar sands (1), which would effectively rule out imports of this environmentally-damaging fuel source. The Greens welcomed the proposals and called on EU governments to swiftly adopt them, with Green MEP **Satu Hassi** stating:

"Today's proposals from Commissioner Hedegaard are an important step to ensuring the true environmental impact of this dirty fuel source is recognised and that oil from dirty tar sands does not find its way to European petrol pumps. Setting a specific default value for tar sands and oil shale in the lifecycle accounting rules for transport fuels, will help ensure the disproportionately negative climate change impact of these fuels is taken into account.

"Given the high carbon intensity of oil from tar sands and shale, it is clearly necessary to distinguish this from conventional crude oil. While stricter default values would have encouraged the refining industry to report and improve on their real emissions, the failure to differentiate for tar sands and oil shale under this methodology would have gone blatantly against the greenhouse gas reduction aim of the EU's fuel quality legislation.

"It is now up to EU member states to approve the proposals (2), and we call on the Council not to succumb to pressure from the tar sands lobby. A cross-party group of MEPs has called for the setting of specific default values for tar sands as a precondition for not vetoing this methodology and member states should bear this in mind." (1) As part of the implementing rules for the EU's legislation on fuel quality, the European Commission today set out proposals for a methodology for the calculation of life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels, including specific default values for "natural bitumen" / oil sands (107g CO2eq/MJ) and oil shale (131.1g CO2eq/MJ), in addition to those for other unconventional oil feedstocks such as "coal to liquid" (172g CO2eq/MJ) and gas to liquid (97g CO2eq/MJ). The value proposed for conventional crude is 87.5 g CO2eq/MJ. (2) The proposal will now be referred to the Council's regulatory committee for scrutiny by EU member states.

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