Don't be a 'bio-fool'

What you can do

Better science can contribute to better policies and a greener, more sustainable biofuel revolution.

Please contact Prime Minister Harper and Environment Minister John Baird and urge them to take three steps:

1. Postpone the new biofuel targets and put a hold on subsidies for the biofuel industry.
2. Initiate an independent scientific review of biofuels.
3. Establish regulations that ensure the sustainable biofuel production.

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More Resources

- *Greener Transportation: Biofuels: The good and the bad.* Summer 2007. NUPGE. www.nupge.ca/environment/Greener_Transportation.pdf
- *Top 5 Ways to Get the Government to Confront the Climate Crisis.* Fall 2007. NUPGE. www.nupge.ca/publications/5_Steps_To_Action.pdf
- *Keeping Our Cool: A Climate Change Primer.* September 2006. NUPGE. www.nupge.ca/publications/Environment/Keeping_Our_Cool.pdf
- *The Western Appetite for biofuels is causing starvation in the poor world.* November 6, 2007. George Monbiot. www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/nov/06/comment.biofuels

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UNION MADE



BIOFOOLS?

IS IT SMART TO PUT SO MUCH FAITH IN BIOFUELS?

WHY YOU SHOULD ASK.

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THEIR BIOFUELS BONANZA

5 reasons for real concern

BIOFUELS ARE being promoted as our way out: an environmentally-friendly alternative to dwindling and dirty fossil fuels; a key element in a winning strategy to relieve or eliminate the dangers of climate change. Prime Minister Harper is one of the first to say so.

Harper has made support for biofuels one of his government's biggest and most expensive environmental policies. They recently announced legislation that will make it mandatory that all fuels have a minimum 5% biofuel content by 2010.

We're concerned that the Harper government policy to dramatically increase biofuel production may be running ahead of the science. Of course we all want greater climate and energy security. However, there are growing scientific warnings that some of the most popular biofuels might have exactly the opposite impacts than intended and may cause more harm than good.

Here are five reasons why we believe the Harper government should not be putting all its eggs in the biofuel basket.



— 1 —

Greenhouse gas emissions may be worse

Biofuels may do little to slow global warming – and may actually make it worse. New scientific research suggests that the production of ethanol and biodiesel often results in higher emissions of greenhouse gases than conventional fossil fuels. These biofuels will not automatically reduce greenhouse gases. Biofuel crops that are grown with energy-intensive nitrogen fertilizers do not reduce carbon emissions significantly.

In addition, the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere by chopping down rainforests or tearing up grasslands to grow corn, sugar cane, soybean, or for palm oil production, can far exceed any carbon saving benefits of biofuels.

— 2 —

Higher food prices and shortages

Increased biofuel production has been linked to soaring food prices and world hunger. The hardest hit by rising food costs are the poorest people and most vulnerable nations. We have dwindling world food stores and limited farm land. These conditions do not allow for biofuel production without creating hunger. We just cannot allow people to grow hungry for the sake of filling our gas tanks.

— 3 —

Greater environmental damage

Just because biofuels are a renewable energy source, doesn't automatically mean they're good for the environment. Leading scientists have warned that even the world's first tentative steps towards increasing biofuel production have done more harm than good to our natural environment.

For example, the Amazon rainforest is being burned to plant more sugar cane and soy; in Southeast Asia rainforests and wilderness are being replaced with palm oil plantations; in the U.S. wild grasslands are being converted to grow corn. This is bad for the planet's biological diversity and all this land clearing actually increases global warming by releasing greenhouse gases from the soil.

Other major environmental concerns include water shortages, pesticide poisoning and soil erosion, all of which are problems that have accompanied large scale farming for decades.

— 4 —

Greater instability and insecurity

Turning food into fuel has triggered violence in many countries. Haiti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Madagascar have suffered food riots. Pakistan and Mexico have witnessed unrest over food prices as grains and oilseeds that once went solely to the food market are now being exported for biofuel production.

The Philippines, Uzbekistan, Bolivia and Cameroon have also had protests or street violence over food shortages. Scientists are not sure that biofuels will improve our environmental security. But it is clear that using more food for fuel has certainly caused greater human insecurity in many regions of the world. This is a clear example of lopsided priorities.

— 5 —

Biofuels not a grand-scale fix

No one single solution will solve all aspects of the climate crisis. If sustainable biofuels are part of the solution to confronting the climate crisis, they are only a piece of a much more comprehensive strategy that must emphasize energy conservation and efficiency, a diversity of renewable energy sources, and putting a price on carbon.

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