



Note: As part of their contributions to the RECLAIM POWER global days of action in October 2016 for energy transformation, several Reclaim Power organizations collaborated on these series of briefing papers on dirty, harmful energy sources and false energy solutions that contribute to climate change and endanger people's lives and welfare.

RESIST DIRTY HARMFUL ENERGY AND FALSE ENERGY SOLUTIONS

AGROFUELS

What are agrofuels?

Agrofuels are liquid fuels that are produced through certain processes from plant and biological material, often food crops. They are different from fossil fuels in that they are not produced by geological processes such as those involved in the formation of fossil fuels, such as coal and petroleum. Agrofuel corporations pass them off as clean energy, thus feeding the common misconception that they are a viable alternative to fossil fuels.

What is the state of agrofuel and biofuel in the world today?

From 2006, the agrofuel market has fast been growing and now operates on a global scale. Bioethanol and biodiesel became established commodities by 2013, and are now traded daily in international markets. Their market increased due to higher demand from the transport sector, especially road vehicles, which use biofuels either in pure form or as blend into conventional fossil fuels (e.g. diesel or gasoline). Among those that drove this demand and consequently intensified agrofuel production in the South, was the European Union's target-setting on using more plant-derived fuels to reduce GHG emissions and reduce dependence on imported oil.

Another important development, which occurred since 2006, was the emergence of alternative markets for liquid agrofuels, beyond their core usage in road transport. Agrofuels started being used in larger scale for aviation, electricity generation, cooking energy and even maritime transport. Policy focus of many countries also migrated from a limited scope of liquid biofuels towards broader notions of bioenergy (solid, liquid and gaseous energy products).ⁱ



In 2014, the world total final energy consumption from biofuel totalled to 1.14 Mtoe (million tons in oil equivalent, as opposed to just 0.62 Mtoe in 1973ⁱⁱ).

Why should we oppose the massive use of agrofuels?

Agrofuels causes hunger, leads to land grabs, spurs deforestation, and contributes to global climate change. The resulting spikes in the prices of food staples from expanding agrofuel production proved disastrous for poor households especially in Asia and Africa.

Agrofuels and Hunger. The US – the world's top corn producer – yielded 15,756 million gallons of ethanol in 2016ⁱⁱⁱ, with nearly half of its corn supply going to ethanol production^{iv}. In May 2014, the Environmental Working Group (EWG) lamented that increased competition for corn, which used to be grown mainly for human food and animal feed has put upward pressure

on its prices^v. The amount of corn required to produce enough ethanol to fill an SUV's tank once could feed an adult for a year^{vi}.

Agrofuel and Land Grabs. Agrofuels have caused human rights abuses. Working conditions in the Brazilian sugar cane ethanol industry are likened to slavery. There, as well as in Indonesia, Colombia and elsewhere, violent conflicts over access to land for palm oil plantations have left a trail of blood^{vii}.

Agrofuels and Deforestation. From 2008 to 2011, more than 8 million acres of grassland and wetlands were converted for corn alone^{viii} [EWG, May 2014]. A recent modeling study found that on current trajectories we would replace virtually all remaining native forests, grasslands and savannahs with energy crop monocultures by 2065^{ix}.

Agrofuels and Climate Change. A study in Southeast Asia of agrofuel life cycle emissions found

that 450 to 900 years of agrofuel crop plantings would be required to "offset" CO2 released from the peatlands cleared to grow the crops^x.

What are our demands regarding the agrofuel issue?

- The immediate end to investment incentives and public subsidies that drive the expansion and intensification of agrofuel production;
- For the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Investment Bank, the Interamerican Development Bank, the African Development Bank and other multilateral financial institutions to stop financing agrofuel projects;
- Stop to excessive energy consumption by corporations and elites; and,
- Full protection of the rights and livelihoods of small-scale farmers, indigenous peoples and forest-dependent communities.

REFERENCES:

ⁱ *The State of the Biofuels Market*, UNCTAD 2014 (draft document)

ⁱⁱ *2016 Key World Energy Statistics*, International Energy Agency (IEA)

ⁱⁱⁱ *Fueling a High Octane Future*, Renewable Fuels Association

^{iv} <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2016/09/13/corn-ethanol-carbon-neutrality.aspx>

^v *Ethanol's Broken Promise*, Environmental Working Group, May 2014

^{vi} *Hoodwinked in the Hothouse – False Solutions to Climate Change (2nd edition)*, Rising Tide North America and Carbon Trade Watch

^{vii} *ibid*

^{viii} *Ethanol's broken promise*. EWG, May 2014

^{ix} *Hoodwinked in the Hothouse – False Solutions to Climate Change (2nd edition)*, Rising Tide North America and Carbon Trade Watch

^x *Ibid*

