

Press Release - Delft, June 29, 2010 - Press Release

Current biofuels as bad as fossil fuels

EU policy needed for Indirect Land Use Change

Without effective EU legislation, the cuts in direct greenhouse gas emissions being pursued through use of biofuels will be entirely offset by the emissions due to the indirect land use change (ILUC) associated with their production. As things stand at the moment, biofuels lead to roughly the same GHG emissions as fossil fuels. That is the conclusion to emerge from a review by independent environmental research institute CE Delft of seven global agro-economic models used for estimating ILUC-related CO₂ emissions.

The report proposes several sets of 'ILUC factors' for each of today's major biofuels for use in the EU's forthcoming regulations on the GHG performance of such fuels. Only by employing such factors can biofuels lead to substantial emissions cuts, since most of them will then be produced from waste, on degraded land or through agricultural intensification.

CE Delft concludes that at the moment the only way to prevent indirect land use change is to introduce a so-called 'ILUC factor', i.e. an additional CO₂/MJ figure, in the GHG rules for biofuels. We identify three possible approaches for determining these 'ILUC factors':

1. Use the maximum values calculated by the 7 models (minimum risk).
2. Use one average value calculated by the 7 models for all biofuels (low risk and simple).
3. Use crop specific average values calculated by the 7 models (low risk and specific).

Only by adopting a suitable ILUC factor can Europe move toward virtually ILUC-free biofuels and thereby secure the 70Mt CO₂ emissions reduction being sought by the European Commission by 2020.

This research was commissioned by BirdLife International, the European Environmental Bureau and Transport & Environment.

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CE Delft is an independent research and consultancy organisation specialised in developing innovative solutions to environmental problems. CE Delft is not only skilled across a wide range of environmental topics, but also familiar with the associated policy networks: trade and industry, government and non-governmental organisations alike. For more information see www.ce.nl.

You can download the report 'Biofuels: indirect land use change and climate impact' at www.ce.nl/en

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