



PRESS RELEASE

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Biofuels don't deliver but bioresources have promise

Biofuels produced from conventional agricultural crops deliver only limited reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and compete for limited supplies of land. The weight of evidence against policies supporting such biofuels has been growing rapidly in Europe and has now been further strengthened with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlighting concerns regarding their potential impact².

Recognising this, the European Commission has made a bold but simple proposal to end all policy support for food crop based biofuels from 2020³. This means phasing out the present volume based targets and finding other ways to reduce the climate impacts of road transport. *"The old targets are no longer fit for purpose"* said Ben Allen, a Senior Policy Analyst at IEEP; *"However, this leaves a policy vacuum that needs to be filled urgently to ensure biomass makes an effective and sustainable contribution to our economies and contributes significant reductions to greenhouse gas emissions"*. IEEP has launched a paper⁴ setting out how policy can move forward in this contentious area; shifting from a biofuels dominated approach to one that focuses holistically on the balanced management of a wide range of bioresources.

At present policy is skewed, putting excess emphasis on the use of biomass for energy without proper consideration of the sustainable limits on production and use. *'Future policy must reflect the reality that while biomass in principle can be renewed, the overall quantity sustainably available is finite and must be shared across an emerging bioeconomy. This includes wood products, bioplastics and other biochemicals, as well as energy. With EU climate policy in flux there is a now a window of opportunity to refocus policy to ensure Europe utilises its bioresources to deliver the greatest value to its citizens, maximise GHG reductions and minimise environmental impacts'* said David Baldock, Director, IEEP.

Over the past 18 months IEEP has been seeking to improve understanding of the core issues in relation to biofuels and the policies supporting them⁵. Our research has culminated in a call to the EU and national governments to change the way biofuels are considered in policy and no longer support the widespread use of conventional biofuels in light of fundamental flaws in the GHG accounting systems. We propose⁶ an approach that strengthens the GHG accounting systems that underpin EU policy, expands the sustainability criteria for the use of biomass to include effective management of waste and residues and advances an integrated framework for the best use of a spectrum of bioresources. This would revolutionise the use of biomass in Europe and direct a valuable resource to the best use into the future.

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Notes to the Editor

- 1- IEEP (the Institute for European Environmental Policy) is an independent research organisation concerned with policies affecting the environment in Europe and beyond. Visit our website: www.ieep.eu; or our Biofuel ExChange website for more information on biofuels: <http://www.ieep.eu/minisites/pursuing-change-in-biofuels-policy-developing-alternatives/news-and-events/>
- 2- Today the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its report Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability, from Working Group II - <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg2/>, within sections on Rural Development and Food Security the report highlights concerns regarding future food price vulnerabilities, food production and the complications that may arise from added pressures emanating from lands use to produce additional materials for example for biofuels.
- 3- Within its Communication 'A policy framework for climate and energy in the period from 2020 to 2030, COM(2014) 15 final' the European Commission states that biofuels produced from food-based feedstocks should not receive 'public support' after 2020. This reflects a more widespread hardening of rhetoric regarding the use of food-based biofuels. Importantly, the term 'public support' is considered to extend beyond explicit subsidies for biofuel uptake to other policy mechanisms. This would potentially include policies promoting ie 'supporting' their use to meet general EU targets for renewables and national support mechanisms including mandates and obligations
- 4- **Re-examining EU Biofuels policy: a Perspective on 2030**, An IEEP discussion paper, March 2014 available to download at <http://www.ieep.eu/publications/2014/03/re-examining-eu-biofuels-policy-a-2030-perspective--1286>
- 5- **The IEEP Biofuel ExChange**, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, goal is 'pursuing change in biofuels policy and developing alternatives' by facilitating discussion among relevant stakeholders. Key outputs include commentary on the ILUC debate at EU level and a focus on the use of waste and residues as alternatives to conventional crop based/land using biofuels. All the information resources can be found at <http://www.ieep.eu/minisites/pursuing-change-in-biofuels-policy-developing-alternatives/news-and-events/>
- 6- Full details are set out in [IEEP's discussion paper, Re-examining EU Biofuel policy: a Perspective on 2030](#)