



EEAC Working Group Energy Workshop

10% Agrofuels: a prudent target? Setting the right priorities for agroenergy use

Chairman's Conclusions

At the spring summit 2007 Heads of state formulated the aim to achieve a 20% share of renewables in primary energy demand and a 10% share for agrofuels by 2020. Some member states even intend to go beyond those targets. The target formulation for agrofuels has been ambiguous. On one side Heads of States wanted to have a legally binding target, on the other side this target has been considered to be appropriate only under certain conditions, such as the availability of second generation agrofuels or the respect of sustainability criteria. In January 2008 the European Commission has launched a proposal for a renewables directive, which will make those targets legally binding if adopted by Council and Parliament.

The workshop brought together evidence from 9 Councils, representatives of the European Commission and the European Environment Agency (full documentation on: <http://www.eeac-net.org/>). More reports are to be in preparation. Based upon the evidence and the discussions I observed a very strong consensus among most participants, namely other representatives from EEAC, EESC, from environmental and development NGO's that can be summarized as follows:

1. Renewable Energy from Biomass may play an important role for meeting those targets, but they are not an infinite resource.
2. A more careful balance must be found between land use for energy and other uses, both within the EU and globally.
3. As renewable energy from biomass is based on finite resources like land, priorities should be set, to make optimal use of biomass for climate mitigation in a cost effective way. Use of biomass waste, use for stationary sources or integrated solutions have a much better climate performance than agrofuels.
4. The 10% target for renewables in fuels, which is mainly an agrofuel target, is not an appropriate target because it does not take into account the risks and uncertainties on climate performance, cost and global and local social and environmental ramifications. The EU is launching with this target a great experiment, whose outcomes are difficult to control with the proposed instruments. More flexibility for learning and review in the view of new facts is needed.
5. The 10% target will require a high level of imports. Safeguards to ensure the sustainability of production outside Europe are difficult to establish. The Sustainability Criteria as suggested by the Commission are insufficient, as they contain too many waivers and

undetermined clauses in need of further specification, clarification and implementation in producing countries. The potentially more important indirect effects on land-use, prices and land-ownership cannot be effectively controlled by unilateral action. Cascade effects and cherry picking strategies of exporting countries cannot be avoided. The 10% target will also increase land-use pressures and intensification within Europe, with potentially negative impacts on the climate performance and on biodiversity.

6. The cost of producing agrofuels is considerably above the cost of other options of climate mitigation by energy crops. As agriculture prices and global energy prices are linked there is doubt, that agrofuels become more competitive in the future.
7. The present support systems of member states do not directly support the climate performance of bioenergies but only indirectly via their energy content. This leads to a major misdirection of investment capital. A price incentive related to the greenhouse gas reduction of the different agroenergies would be a more efficient and effective instrument than setting a quantitative target.
8. 2nd generation technologies may have a better performance, but it is far from certain when and to what degree they will be able to achieve relevant market shares before the year 2020.
9. Like many research centers, national and international bodies, and NGOs also most workshop participants see the need, that the Commission, Member States and the European Parliament revise downwards the overambitious agrofuel target, at a minimum allow for interim reviews in order to consider new evidence, reformulate the sustainability criteria to become stricter and better directly enforceable and advance international negotiations on a global framework to address indirect social and environmental consequences.

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