

Namur, February 14th, 2012

Mister Karel De Gucht  
EU Trade Commissioner

O/ref. : CEF NL 120214 KDeGucht Biofuels

Your contact : Noé Lecocq, e-mail : [n.lecocq@iewonline.be](mailto:n.lecocq@iewonline.be), tel. : +32 (0) 81 390 769

CC : Marc Vanheukelen, Head of Cabinet, Jean-Luc Demarty , Director General, Evelyne Huytebroeck, Environment Minister

### **EU biofuels policy : Accounting for indirect land use change (ILUC) and Commission reporting on broader impacts**

Dear Commissioner De Gucht,

I am writing on behalf of several Belgian organizations to urge you to respect two engagements of the Commission regarding biofuels policy.

First, we urge you and the Commission to present a legislative proposal which obliges producers to take account of ILUC impacts in evaluating the carbon footprint of biofuels. Only by doing so, can the Commission fulfill the legislative mandate provided in the Renewable Energy Directive and the Fuel Quality Directive, to introduce a *"concrete methodology for emissions from carbon stock changes caused by indirect land-use"*. These provisions must be based on the *"best available scientific evidence"*, indicating that some level of unavoidable uncertainty in scientific models should not be used to justify inaction or further delay.

In its report of December 2010, the Commission acknowledged that an absence of intervention on ILUC could affect the objective to reduce GHG emissions from biofuels. It also stated that *"if action is required, indirect land use change should be addressed under a precautionary approach"*.

Several studies, including the Commission's own impact assessment study show that ILUC impacts will be significant and will differ between different types of biofuels. Some types of biofuels will lead to emissions that are higher than those of fossil fuels. This should be more than enough to trigger policy change guided by a precautionary approach.

Of all the policy options assessed by the Commission, we wish to emphasise that only 'option D' (attribute a quantity of greenhouse gas emissions to biofuels reflecting the estimated indirect land-use impact) is in line with scientific consensus and the legislative mandate. Only correct accounting for GHG emissions of biofuels, including those associated with ILUC,

enables the necessary distinction between biofuels that reduce emissions and those that don't.

Moreover, there is no link between direct GHG emissions and indirect land use change emissions. So if the other option under closer consideration, 'option B' (an increase in required direct GHG savings), is chosen, biofuels policy would still rely on a GHG emission accounting that has big discrepancies with real GHG emissions. This policy would do little to prevent the emissions from ILUC, as it only regulates direct emissions from biofuel production. Biofuels would keep displacing agricultural land elsewhere and hence cause ILUC emissions.

Secondly, time has come to evaluate broader impacts of biofuels policy, as article 17(7) of the Renewable Energy Directive states :

*"The Commission shall, every two years, report to the European Parliament and the Council on the impact on social sustainability in the Community and in third countries of increased demand for biofuel, on the impact of Community biofuel policy on the availability of foodstuffs at affordable prices, in particular for people living in developing countries, and wider development issues. Reports shall address the respect of land-use rights. (...) The first report shall be submitted in 2012. The Commission shall, if appropriate, propose corrective action, in particular if evidence shows that biofuel production has a significant impact on food prices."*

Targets for biofuels in the EU are triggering rapid expansion in production of biofuels feedstocks and inevitable land use change. Recent estimates suggest that biofuels drive more than 50% of large-scale land acquisitions globally, and 66% in Africa (International Land Coalition report, ILC, IIED and CIRAD, 2011). Biofuels compete with other crops for water and land, and are often grown on land previously used to collect or grow food. In 2011 WFP, FAO and other international agencies have called for the G20 to remove policies that promote biofuels consumption or production because they force up food prices.

Only by addressing ILUC through feedstock-specific ILUC factors can EU biofuels policy be aligned with science. Only by taking into consideration broader impacts biofuels policy to adapt it, can this policy stay in line with Europe's longstanding commitment for development, health protection and human rights. We stand at a point where clarification is needed for EU biofuels policy.

Thank you for considering these important points.

Yours faithfully,

Christophe Schoune  
Secretary-general of Inter-Environnement Wallonie



On behalf of:

Danny Jacobs, Director, Bond Beterleefmilieu  
Arnaud Zacharie, Secretary-general, CNCD-11.11.11  
Michel Genet, Director, Greenpeace Belgium  
Stefaan Declercq, Director, Oxfam Belgium  
Diane Mertens, President, FIAN Belgium  
Bernard Duterme, Director, Centre Tricontinental  
Betty Beys, Coordinator, Pesticide Action Network

