



WWF and SNV's statement on Bioenergy CBD COP 9 May 2008

Global interest in biofuels has grown rapidly in recent years. Global production has doubled over the last five years and will likely continue to increase in the next four years. Most countries have adopted bioenergy as part of their strategy to meet local energy demands; generate income and employment and encourage rural development. Although a mere 10% of current biofuel production is traded internationally, the trend is also expected to increase in the coming years, partly due to commitments of some industrialised nations to meet their domestic greenhouse gas emission reduction targets thus generating export revenues from producer countries.

A vast number of literature indicates that the developments of biofuels are neither necessarily environmentally friendly nor beneficial for poor communities. Current biofuel feedstocks are energy-intensive and involve largely industrial-scale monoculture production. In some parts of the world, biofuel feedstock production is taking a heavy environmental toll on water, soil and ecological biodiversity. Investment from foreign firms seeking biofuel feedstock is also aggravating land disputes and intensifying the political fight to protect food security.

AT CBD COP 9, WWF, the global conservation organisation and SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, working together in a global partnership on sustainable and pro-poor biofuel production, urge member states to adopt the following principles in developing their strategies to ensure sustainable development of biofuels.

Bioenergy should deliver large positive energy and GHG balances over fossil fuels.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) and energy balances vary widely amongst energy crops. Some crops perform far better than others. It is not enough to look into crop selection, soil and climate as determining factors for bioenergy production. Any land conversion of carbon rich vegetation such as primary forests or soils such as peat lands can also cancel out the potential carbon benefits of bioenergy feed stocks. As such, impacts of land use change, agricultural practices, use of by-products and low carbon sources of energy, conversion techniques and final energy use, will also affect the life cycle of GHG balance and therefore need to be considered.

Energy crops should be selected on the basis of the most efficient carbon (soil and air) and energy balance, from production through to processing and use.

Conventional crops such as sugar cane for bioethanol for example, can provide these benefits if produced and processed sustainably. Future investment and research needs to be oriented towards more efficient technologies and towards ligno-cellulosic crops that offer better options to reduce GHG emissions as well as reduced impact on the environment.

Displacement effects that influence GHG balance, mitigate social and environmental damage should be addressed

Competition for staple products or displacement of food crops as a result of bioenergy development is of particular concern. National and international mechanisms should be put in place to monitor impacts of

biofuel production on food availability, access to food and stability of food supply. Early warning system and intervention strategies must be in place particularly for the small and vulnerable small holders.

Bioenergy strategies must contribute to the livelihood and wellbeing of indigenous populations

Biofuel development should not harm and should contribute to the wellbeing of smallholders and communities in rural areas, particularly indigenous peoples. Because indigenous peoples are often discriminated against and politically marginalized, special efforts should be made to respect, protect, and comply with their collective and individual rights, including customary as well as resource rights. Indigenous peoples have the rights to the lands, territories, and resources that they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and that those rights must be recognized and effectively protected, as laid out in the ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Therefore special efforts should be made to establish stakeholder mechanisms in order to ensure that indigenous peoples likely to be affected by biofuel development can give their prior informed consent to that development and can share in the benefits.

Permanent grasslands, natural and semi-natural forests, natural floodplains, wet and peat lands, important habitats for threatened species and other high conservation value (HCV) areas should not be converted to bioenergy production

Experience has shown that when a certain crop replaces an already existing agricultural production capacity, (in most cases), the demand for the original crop will not disappear from the market. As the demand persists, new production capacity will be set up, in many cases by converting high conservation value (HCV) areas into new agricultural land. Their conversion can lead to a host of negative consequences.

Bioenergy feedstocks should be produced using better management practices

Better management practices ensure responsible use of soil and water resources, enhancement and/or protection of biological diversity and fair social benefits. Lessons from cross sectoral experience on better management practices must be made available and shared across countries and landscapes.

There should be an equitable playing field for small producers

The development of biofuels has the potential to impact positively on poverty through employment and income effects for small producers, wider growth multipliers, energy price effects, etc. However, there are risks that some of these potential may be lost as economies of large unsustainable operations kick in, especially with bioethanol, and as pressures on land increase. In a lot of areas in the developing world, land ownership, tenure and/or stewardship of land is non-existent or unclear, particularly for small producers. Strong legal frameworks are required to provide small farmers with continued secure access to land, particularly in cases of unclear tenancy or ownership. Inclusive business models where biofuel production companies enter in a sustainable and equitable relationship with local, independent providers of feedstocks have strong potential to contribute to income and employment increase of small holders in developing countries. Pro-poor policies should be put in place such as quotas for procurement of feedstocks from family farms; and providing small producers with access to credit and technologies to process cleaner biofuel.

Governments should implement complementary measures: including land use planning, food security measures, improvement of law enforcement and governance.

Certification and standards are not a panacea for driving sustainable bioenergy. Some impacts of bioenergy production, such as the indirect land-use changes due to bioenergy production, are currently difficult to tackle within a certification scheme. For this reason, additional instruments such as: efficient and participatory land-use planning, improved governance, law-enforcement, waste products and preferred use of "idle land" and the monitoring of macro effects of bioenergy production are needed.

Public subsidies and other financial instruments should be directed towards additional measures to help ensure sustainable and pro-poor bioenergy production

Given the rapid growth of bioenergy industry, public finance should be allocated to ensure functioning integrated landscape planning policies to balance biodiversity conservation, social needs and commercial

land-use. Resources should also be allocated to transparent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of bioenergy production performance in producer regions and in ensuring biofuels deliver emission reductions.

Biodiversity concerns should be incorporated in the broader energy policies

Biofuel strategies should also be developed within a broader energy framework that works to reduce energy production and consumption; promote sustainable transport and improve energy efficiency. Impacts on forest and agricultural biodiversity should be taken into account not only in the biofuel strategy development, but also in the broader energy policies development.

JOINT PROJECTS ON THE GROUND

WWF and SNV are currently undertaking collaborative pilot initiatives entitled, 'Bioenergy for Sustainable Rural Development' in various parts of the world.

These pilot initiatives aim to help inform the development of country/regional strategies and options for the development of biofuels in small to medium sized countries in Asia, Latin and Africa. Country studies are currently being undertaken to examine opportunities and challenges in biofuels production and trade in Cambodia, Laos, Nepal and Vietnam in Asia; and Honduras, Peru and Bolivia in Latin America. Discussions are also held with African partners to determine the best approach and value added that WWF and SNV can bring to the myriad of activities undertaken by various organisations in the Eastern African region. Results from these studies will be available at the end of 2008.

For further information, please contact:

Rob Soutter, WWF International at rsoutter@wwfint.org

Hans Heijdra, SNV at hheijdra@snvworld.org