

## Stop the Destruction of Forests and Lands for Wood-based Bio-energy

*May 2010*

The undersigned NGOs, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations and social movements call upon the European Union and EU member states to halt and reverse the expansion of large-scale wood-based bio-energy production as well as the development of wood-based agrofuels.

Bio-energy promotion is based on a severe underestimation of the direct and indirect impacts of large-scale bio-energy production on forests and forest peoples. Large-scale, industrial bio-energy bears little resemblance to traditional and other local uses of biomass, which are an essential source of energy for local communities, especially in developing countries. Replacing highly energy-dense fossil fuels with plant materials requires far more land per unit of energy than almost all other types of energy.

Much greater pressures on forests and other ecosystems, on soils and freshwater as well as more land-grabbing for tree plantations are the certain consequence of a new global market in wood for bio-energy. The main victims are Indigenous Peoples and other forest-dependent peoples in the South, in particular women, who depend on access to forests for fuelwood and other local bio-energy sources for their families.

It is widely, yet wrongly, assumed that wood power stations burn only 'residues', such as sawdust, mill ends, branches and trimmings, rather than whole trees. Even the use of such residues is problematic since materials, such as sawdust, are often already in demand for low-grade wood products. Burning residues for heat and electricity displaces other demand and can thus trigger more industrial logging and plantation expansion.

Furthermore, deadwood, branches, leaves and twigs and even tree stumps are increasingly defined as 'residues' even though they are essential for recycling nutrients and thus for keeping soils fertile, for biodiversity and for carbon storage. Moreover, the demand for wood biomass far outpaces the production of "residues", thus increasingly whole trees are being turned into woodchips and pellets for power stations. The demand for industrial wood bio-energy is beginning to cause large areas to be taken over by monoculture tree plantations.

Despite plantation expansion and destructive levels of logging and 'residue removal', the EU is nowhere near capable of providing enough wood biomass to satisfy its' own demands for bio-energy as well as other uses. As a result, competition for wood biomass is escalating. Most European wood imports for bio-energy still come from North America, but European demand competes with North America's own wood bio-energy expansion as well as with previously established pulp and paper manufacturers. This displacement of North American paper production increases the likelihood of massive pulp mill and plantation expansion in South America, South-east and East Asia and southern Africa as well as in Russia. Moreover, expansion of tree plantations explicitly to meet new bio-energy demands has already been reported from, amongst others, West Papua, the Republic of Congo and Guyana.

The demand for wood (and other forms of biomass) will rise even further if 'second generation' agrofuels become commercially viable. So far, these liquid fuels remain largely in the research and development phase, but biotech firms, pulp and paper companies and oil firms have joined forces to invest billions of dollars into research on wood-based agrofuels, including through research in genetically engineered trees.

Genetically engineered trees pose a major new threat to forests, forest-dependent communities and the climate. It is impossible to predict the impacts of GE trees because unexpected mutations are the norm rather than the exception with all genetically engineered plants. Trees can spread themselves across large areas. GE trees can therefore easily establish themselves in native forests and/or cross-fertilise with native trees. Unstable low-lignin trees are being engineered for cellulosic ethanol production whereas fast-growing and cold-resistant trees are attractive for wood bio-energy for heat and electricity.

The European debate regarding biomass has so far largely focused on sustainability standards – which the European Commission has, for the time being, ruled out as far as EU-wide standards are concerned. The question whether a further massive increase in Europe's demand for wood can possibly be met sustainably if one takes into account all the indirect impacts, particularly in a global market, has been largely ignored in the policy debate. Yet no standard can prevent higher prices for wood driving plantation expansion and increased logging elsewhere in the world. The wider, indirect, impacts of ecosystem conversion to industrial monoculture plantations

and greater and more destructive logging of natural forests are likely to be equally severe as the indirect impacts of agrofuels have proven to be.

By driving up the European demand and the global price for wood industrial bio-energy is set to increase land grabbing and speculation for tree plantations, expand destructive logging and speed up the conversion of biodiverse native forests to monoculture tree plantations.

That is why the undersigned groups call upon the EU to immediately abandon all support measures for large-scale wood-based bio-energy and agrofuel production.

**Signed by:**

A.W.A.R.E. eV., Germany  
Acción Ecológica, Ecuador  
Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network, Belgium  
Agribusiness Action Initiatives, Latin America  
Amazon Fund  
Amazon Fund International  
Amigos de la Tierra, Spain  
ARA/Arbeitsgruppe Regenwald, Germany  
Asociacion ANDES, Peru  
Asociacion Cultural Mazarrabah, Spain  
Asociacion Indigena Ambiental, Panama  
Barker & Sheldon Ltd, UK  
Berne Declaration, Switzerland  
Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha, India,  
South Asian Dialogues on Ecological Democracy, India  
Biofuelwatch, UK  
Biomass-in-Pankow, Germany  
Bismarck Ramu Group, Papua New Guinea  
BUND Neu-Isenburg  
Bureau for Regional Outreach Campaigns, Russia  
CADDE, Gabon  
Canadians for Action on Climate Change  
CENSAT Agua Viva/ Friends of the Earth-Colombia  
Centro Humboldt, Nicaragua  
CESTA, El Salvador  
Circle for Humanity, Netherlands  
CODEFF, Chile  
Corporate Europe Observatory  
Ecological Internet USA and Papua New Guinea  
Ecological Society of the Philippines  
Ecology Action Centre, USA  
Ecoropa, Germany  
European Consumers for the Promotion of Sustainable Energy in Europe  
FASE, Brazil  
Foundation Pro Papua, the Netherlands  
Friedens- und Begegnungsstätte Mutlacher, Germany  
Friends of Peoples close to Nature, Germany  
Friends of the Earth International  
Friends of the Earth-Sierra Leone  
Friends of the Siberian Forests, Russia  
Fundacion para la Promocion del Conocimiento Indigena, Panama  
GenderCC, Germany  
Genesis Farm, USA  
Global Forest Coalition  
Global Justice Ecology Project, USA  
GM Watch  
GMX, Germany  
Hababusch Hostel, Germany  
Haverhill Environmental League, USA  
Indienhilfe e.V., Germany

International Analog Forestry Network  
Keep Trinidad and Tobago Beautiful, Trinidad and Tobago  
Latino Club, Germany  
Native Forest Council  
Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales, Chile  
Ojalá, Netherlands  
Ole Siosiomaga Society, Samoa  
Oregon Toxics Alliance, USA  
Otros Mundos, Mexico  
Pacific Indigenous Peoples Environment Coalition  
Pacific Institute of Resource Management, New Zealand  
Protect Ozark Wildlife and Rivers, USA  
Provincial women, Russia  
Pro-Wildlife, Germany  
Rainforest Information Centre, Australia  
RECOMA-Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations  
REDES/Friends of the Earth-Uruguay  
Rettet den Regenwald, Germany  
Salva la Selva, Spain  
Savia, Escuela de Pensamiento Ecologista, Spain  
Sobrevivencia/Friends of the Earth-Paraguay  
Society for Threatened Peoples International  
SOSNA Association, Slovak Republic  
Stichting Tierra Nossa, Netherlands  
Sustainability Watch Network Central America  
Timberwatch Coalition, South Africa  
Union Paysanne, France  
Viola, Russia  
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