

PRESS RELEASE

How sustainable are biofuels? Dutch Minister suggests criteria needed to avoid negative effects

Freiburg, 14 April 2008 – In January, the European Commission put forward a new directive proposal on increasing the share of biofuels in Europe to 10% in 2020 and importantly, on introducing sustainability criteria in the achievement of this target. In the latest issue of *Biofuel Cities Quarterly*, Dr Jacqueline Cramer, the Dutch Minister of Environment, tackles the topic of negative impacts of biofuels.

Several concerns about the potential risks of biofuel production have recently raised media attention and public debate. The primary problem of an increased demand for biofuel feedstock is the pressure it puts on available arable land, since land-use change often causes so much carbon release from vegetation and soils that the savings from the use of biofuels are negated. Other important concerns are the negative impacts on biodiversity or the competition between biofuel and food.

It is commonly agreed that biofuels should be produced in a responsible manner. But what is considered responsible or sustainable? How relevant are the different aspects of the debate? As illustrated by the Commission's new directive, policy makers are trying to answer this question by drawing up sustainability criteria and implementing them on a European and national level.

In this issue of *Biofuel Cities Quarterly*, Dr. Jacqueline Cramer, the Dutch Minister of Environment, also responsible for the Cramer biomass sustainability Criteria, presents her expertise as a policy maker and practitioner. She feels that the European Commission has taken an important step with the proposed sustainability requirements in the Renewable Energy Directive, since biofuels are, in the short term, „one of the main alternative fuel options available for the transport sector.“

However, „the biofuel target of 10% should only be maintained if it can be reached in a sustainable way. (...) The application of criteria for biofuels is essential to avoid its adverse effects“, she says. For her, ways of dealing with indirect land use change and competition with food have to be found rapidly, for example by using monitoring programmes to help identify negative effects, in order to take the appropriate policy measures.

As such, companies involved in the biofuel sector have a social responsibility and should work together with governments to implement sustainability criteria. Also interviewed, Dr A.P.C. Faaij, associate professor and co-ordinator of energy research at the Copernicus Institute for Sustainable Development of Utrecht University suggests that „market players could (...) take the initiatives to set their own sustainability requirements and develop the necessary systems.“

Based on the competence of major leading authorities, this fourth issue of *Biofuel Cities Quarterly* documents the current debate and suggests concrete measures to establish sustainability criteria for biofuels, in order to help governments and businesses take the most appropriate decisions.

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www.biofuel-cities.eu



Background Information:

The Biofuel Cities European Partnership is a forum for the application of biofuels. Open to all stakeholders in the area of biofuels for vehicles, it offers www.biofuel-cities.eu - a one-stop-shop for information on biofuels application; online facilities, workshops and study tours to exchange and network with your peers and learn from experts; news, publications and tools to provide information, guidance and support.

Biofuel Cities European Partnership participants have full access to all features and participation is free. The Partnership was unofficially launched in July 2007 and more than 850 biofuels professionals and other interested stakeholders have already signed up

The Biofuel Cities European Partnership was created and is managed by the Biofuel Cities project, which aims to demonstrate the broadscale use of new and innovative biofuel technologies. Biofuel Cities covers the complete chain from feedstock to biofuels production, distribution and utilisation in vehicle fleets. The project is co-ordinated by seven partners* that share unique and extensive experiences, not only on biofuels research and application and sustainable mobility, but also on the specific needs of local governments and private enterprise. It is supported by the European Commission under the EU's Sixth Research Framework Programme.

*SenterNovem, Exergia, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, INEM – International Network for Environmental Management, IPIEO – Institute for Fuels and Renewable Energy, NEN – Netherlands Standardisation Institute, VITO - Flemish Institute for Technological Research

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