

1) The industrial agro-fuels are inefficient on the levels of energy, economy and society

The industrial agro-fuels are fooling the farmers and the other citizens. Indeed it is a mistake to produce industrial fuels from corn, wheat, beet or rapeseed. These industrial agro fuels of first generation, resulting from intensive farming, have a very low energy effectiveness and poor balances regarding the greenhouse gas emissions.

The energetically effectiveness is¹:

- around 1,00 for corn ethanol (1,00 = same energy used to produce it as energy in the final product)
- 1,06 for wheat ethanol - 1,14 for sugar beet ethanol - 1,66 for rapeseed methyl ester
- these figures become 1,35 (wheat) - 1,25 (beet) - 2,23 (rapeseed) if we integrate the savings generated by the use in animal feed of the by-products).
- The rapeseed oil pressed on the farm has better results (1,88 and 3,8), especially regarding greenhouse gas emissions

Only ethanol from sugar cane has very good energetically results. But Europe does not produce any.

It is thus better to give priority to a better energetically autonomy of the farms by supporting pure rapeseed oil rather than agro-fuel plants: these have a very disputed energetically and climatic profitability; their economical profitability depends on large subsidies (taxes exemptions), and they will favour the large farms in detriment to rural employment.

The settlement of these plants often close to large harbours shows that the priority will be given in fact to the import of cheaper tropical agro-fuels .

The energetically nonsense of the current policy has been just confirmed by the European industry of fertilizers², which plans an increase in the consumption of nitrate fertilizers linked with the expansion of the agro-fuels. Let us point out that nitrate fertilizers account for approximately 40% of the energy consumption of the farms!

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The development of second generation fuels resulting from biomass (wood, cellulose, organic waste) seems more promising from the energy point of view than the annual intensive cultures, providing that soil organic matter is preserved. However the expected volumes of these fuels would represent only a marginal part of the oil fuels Europe is using now.

2) in competition with the food production in Europe and worldwide

The only incorporation of 5,75% of agrofuels in oil fuels would require 20% of the present grain area. By using the whole agricultural area of the EU, one could provide only 30% of the present needs for fuels. If the EU would import agrofuels, the problem of competition with food would be moved to other countries and the great energy dependence of Europe would be maintained.

Instead of giving priority to the reduction of transport, the industrialized countries develop great projects of agro-fuel production in tropical countries like Colombia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil,... That is done to the detriment of food security and biodiversity³. For ex. the rain forests in Sumatra are changed into large plantations of palm trees for oil, completely unproductive from the biodiversity point of view.

It is necessary to urge a wide debate in Europe on the priorities to be given to the use of land (food production, urbanization, infrastructures, energy, natural reserves...). It must be taken in account that a massive production of meat, characteristic of the industrialized countries, needs much land.

¹ see the EDEN study:

<http://www.espoir-rural.fr/images/stories/section/agrocarburants%20%20synthese%20eden%202006.pdf>

² <http://www.efma.org/Members/Press/Press%202006/PR%20re%20Forecast%202006.pdf>

³. See the NGO letter to the EU - http://www.corporateeurope.org/Open_Letter_EU_biofuels

3) agrofuels subsidies instead of CAP subsidies ?

The CPE wonders about the very strong agro-industrial lobbying in favour of agro-fuels, with the support of the European Commission. Facing the lack of legitimacy of the current CAP support from the international and social points of view and by anticipating a strong decrease of the EU agricultural budget after 2013, they try to direct the public opinion (more sensitive to the European energy dependence than to food dependence, because badly informed) to the need for subsidizing the production and the use of agro-fuels. That would guarantee the maintenance of great subsidies for large farms and industry.

4) the farms can contribute positively to the decrease of global warming:

- by changing the ways of farming (to decrease in priority the use of nitrate fertilizers) to get more autonomous and energy saving farms,
- by adopting systems of production and farming techniques allowing to raise the organic matter rates of the soils, in order to increase the quantities of carbon confined in the soil (which represent the double of carbon in the atmosphere),
- if one favours the production of pure oil pressed on the farm or locally, as well as biogas,
- if one favours for the development of solar electricity on the roofs of the agricultural buildings

5) It is necessary to change the agricultural and trade policies

The climatic crisis condemns the logic of the current CAP and WTO which increases transport, and imposes to relocate the economy, giving priority to efficiency, employment and environment. That is the way the EU has to choose at the next EU summit on 8/9 March, and not to give credit to the illusion of the industrial agro-fuels.