**Activist Groups Denounce Bio-economy and Sustainable Biomass Myth on
International Day against Monoculture Tree Plantations**

Asuncion/London/Edinburgh/Buffalo, 21 September 2012

On the occasion of the International Day of Protest Against
Monoculture Tree Plantations {1}, the Global Forest Coalition [2],
Biofuelwatch [3] Critical Information Collective [4] and Global
Justice Ecology Project [5] warn against EU and US plans to expand the
bio-economy [6].

This new industrial strategy assumes that massive amounts of
additional biomass could be produced sustainably in order to be burned
for industrial and commercial electricity and heat, or processed to
replace petroleum fuels used in transportation or various
manufacturing and industrial processes.

However, there is evidence to show that increasing demand for biomass,
and the land on which to produce it, is contributing to staggering
increases in food prices, leading to hunger and malnutrition. It is
also encouraging land grabs, displacing and undermining the
livelihoods of peasant communities and Indigenous Peoples, and
triggering greater forest and biodiversity loss.

Furthermore, the belief that using biomass to replace fossil fuels is
‘climate friendly’ has been soundly refuted. While industrial
proponents claim it is ‘carbon neutral’, scientists have shown that it
may take decades or even centuries for new trees to reabsorb the
carbon released into the atmosphere through the combustion of
biomass-based fuels.

Policymakers and even some environmentalists claim that introducing
so-called sustainability standards and criteria will avoid these
problems, but the new Biofuelwatch report “Sustainable Biomass: A
Modern Myth” [7] shows that standards are ineffective and serve to
legitimise an inherently unsustainable new demand for industrial
bioenergy, created by government subsidies and mandates.

Almuth Ernsting, one of the authors of the report, says: "The UK
offers a prime example of the dangers of biomass sustainability
standards. It is the first country to introduce mandatory standards,
which, together with biomass subsidies, will make the UK one of the
biggest importers of wood-based biomass worldwide. Soon, UK power
stations could be burning nine times as much wood as the country can
produce itself. ‘Sustainability standards’ are thus being used to
create an inherently unsustainable new demand for wood."

“One of the biggest threats to the world’s remaining forests is that
they will be directly or indirectly replaced by monoculture tree
plantations, which are expected to produce more biomass than forests,
but which have been documented as storing only a quarter of the carbon
that is stored in natural forests,” states Simone Lovera, Executive
Director of the Global Forest Coalition. “Additionally, the
replacement of biologically diverse forests with monoculture tree
plantations has devastating impacts on biodiversity, and on the
Indigenous Peoples and local communities that depend on forest
resources. If future plantations also include genetically engineered
(GE) trees, these impacts will be even more serious and
unpredictable.”

Isaac Rojas, Biodiversity Coordinator of Friends of the Earth
International, asked recently: “I wonder why many people, including
some environmentalists, still believe large-scale tree plantations
heavily sprayed with chemicals are desirable or even sustainable…
timber plantations have a negative impact on communities, local
economies and biodiversity….They are simply a huge concern … in many
countries, including my own, Costa Rica.“[9]

In a joint letter that was launched today [8], more than 240 groups
and individuals are calling upon governments to stop the expansion of
tree plantations.

For further information:

Simone Lovera, executive director, Global Forest Coalition (in
Paraguay): +595-21-663654, simone.lovera@globalforestcoalition.org

Almuth Ernsting, co-director, Biofuelwatch (in the UK):
+44-131-6232300, almuthbernstinguk@yahoo.co.uk

NOTES FOR EDITORS

[1] The 2012 International Day against Monoculture Tree Plantations
will be observed through seminars, demonstrations and other actions
organized by forest campaigners all over the world. See
[http://www.wrm.org.uy](http://www.wrm.org.uy/) for more information on the actions that have
been planned.

[2] The Global Forest Coalition is a coalition of Indigenous Peoples’
Organizations and NGOs from 39 different countries promoting
rights-based, socially just and effective forest conservation
policies. ([http://www.globalforestcoalition.org](http://www.globalforestcoalition.org/))

[3] Biofuelwatch is a not-for-profit organisation campaigning against
the expansion of industrial scale biomass and biofuels in the UK and
US ([http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk](http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/))

[4] Critical Information Collective is a ‘one stop shop’ providing
access to a wide range of accessible and incisive information
challenging corporate-driven economic globalization and promoting fair
and sustainable alternatives. The bio-economy alert and all the
reports mentioned in this press releases can be downloaded form
[www.criticalcollective.org/publications/green-economy-3](http://www.criticalcollective.org/publications/green-economy-3)

[5] Global Justice Ecology Project coordinates the global Campaign to
Stop Genetically Engineered trees ([http://nogetrees.org](http://nogetrees.org/))

[6] The ‘Biodiversity and Livelihoods under Attack from Industrial
‘Bio-economy’ Strategy’ alert gives a concise explanation of the risks
and negative impacts of bio-economy strategies and links to six key
recent reports on bio-economies and other information materials, from
a range of NGOs and Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations. The bio-economy
alert and all the reports mentioned in this press releases can be
downloaded form
[www.criticalcollective.org/publications/green-economy-3](http://www.criticalcollective.org/publications/green-economy-3)

[7] The report “Sustainable Biomass: A Modern Myth” is available from
[www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2012/biomass\_myth\_report](http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2012/biomass_myth_report).

[8] <http://www.wrm.org.uy/plantations/21_set/2012/Open_letter.html>

[9] <http://www.alternet.org/hot-news-views/why-tree-plantations-are-problem-not-solution>