**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:  
  
  
  
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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>