



## Press Brief

# Biofuels and Biodiversity

### Why is this important?

Biofuels are being promoted as part of the global response to climate change but there are concerns that their production and use could have significant impacts on biodiversity that could affect livelihoods, food supplies and energy security.

Biofuels include substitutes for fossil fuels that are derived from biomass — such as alcohols, biogas, fuel wood, vegetable oil and animal fats. For instance, ethanol is produced from sugar cane and maize while rapeseed and palm oil are used to make biodiesel. Many other crops are also used.

Liquid transport fuels like ethanol and biodiesel have been heavily promoted in recent years as a means of increasing energy security, supporting domestic agricultural producers, generating income and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Yet the energy yield, greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impacts of biofuels vary greatly depending on the type of crop, and where and how it is produced, processed and used. As many current biofuels are based on agricultural products, there are additional concerns about the use of fertilizers, pesticides and water, and the possible invasiveness of some biofuel crops.

Concerns over increased deforestation and the drainage of wetlands for the expansion of agricultural land are also emerging.

In terms of socio-economic impacts, the demand for biofuel could potentially increase rural incomes and create employment opportunities. On the negative side, increased commodity prices resulting from the diversion of agricultural products from the food to the energy sector, as well as trade distorting subsidies and import tariffs, can pose serious consequences for developing countries with implications for agricultural production and food security.



Convention on  
Biological Diversity

[www.cbd.int/agro/biofuels](http://www.cbd.int/agro/biofuels)



## What news to expect in Nagoya?

In May 2010, the CBDs' Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) recommended that COP10 take action to develop and implement policies to promote the positive and minimize, or avoid, the negative impacts of biofuels on biodiversity.

In particular, SBSTTA called for policies that would assess both direct and indirect impacts on biodiversity of the production and use of biofuels in their full life cycle, as compared to the effects of other types of fuels.

SBSTTA also recommended COP10 to examine impacts of biofuel production and use on biodiversity that would affect related socio economic conditions and food and energy security.

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