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Greens call for moratorium on agrofuels

Food prices/agrofuels

At a press conference in Strasbourg, Green MEPs called on the European Commission to scrap its 10% target for agrofuels and to establish a moratorium to allow clarification of their use.

Rebecca Harms, Vice-President of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament, said:

"Agrofuels alone are not to blame for the rise in food prices, but they are exacerbating the current crisis. Agrofuels only make sense when they contribute to climate protection and that is not currently the case. It was a bad move from the start to replace food crops with energy crops and the 10% agrofuels target that the European Commission is still clinging onto cannot be justified.

The Greens also call for a moratorium on the use of crops as an energy source. The boom in production of inefficient agrofuels at a time of rising food prices worldwide is creating competition between food and energy production. To counter this, we support biomass as an energy source, based on efficient use of residues and waste, since this does not compete with food production or contribute to the climate change problem. The current food crisis will only worsen if the consequences of climate change are not taken into account. The EU must now respond and make food security a priority.

Friedrich Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf, Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, said:

"The increasing conflict between food and energy production can only be solved through a radical rethink of agriculture. We need to establish a new balance between crop and rising meat production, as well as rethink the entire equation of food and energy production.

Securing food safety in the poorest countries of the world cannot be guaranteed in the long term by food aid or artificially low food prices. As the recently published UN world agriculture report recommends, developing countries need

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support to be more self-reliant, and this should be achieved through rural development programmes, not a heavier focus on exports. The EU should set up a fund for rural development in poorer countries, as already exists within the EU.

Claude Turmes, Vice-President of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament and draftsman on the Renewables Directive said:

"Several scientific advisers to the European Commission have come out against the agrofuels target, yet it still holds onto its course and refers to the EU leaders' decision in March 2007 to source 10% of renewable energies from agrofuels by 2020.

This target was clearly set under great pressure from the car industry, which was trying to deflect attention from its own pressures regarding efficiency measures for cars. We need a reform of European agriculture, trade and energy policies to put food security first and to introduce sustainability criteria in food production.

We call on the Commission to bring an end to mislabelling – so-called 'biofuels' are in fact 'agrofuels' and have nothing to do with environmental protection. They create high risks for food production and the environment and the Commission must acknowledge this in the language it uses."