

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT BIOFUELS

CAN BIODIESEL AND ETHANOL SAVE THE WORLD?



ORGANIC
CONSUMERS
ASSOCIATION

While the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) supports the production of biofuels from recycled waste (such as used vegetable oil, manure or sewage) and biomass sustainably grown and harvested for the benefit of local communities, the current focus on subsidizing big-agribusiness with billions of dollars of funding for inefficient fuels, while ignoring energy conservation, is a recipe for disaster.

These misguided funding priorities have taken tens of billions of dollars of funding away from essential greenhouse gas reduction policies, such as energy conservation, solar and wind power, fuel-efficiency technologies, and mass transit. Many of the current methods of industrial-scale biofuel production are also causing food shortages and worsening global warming by increasing deforestation and degradation of peatlands and soils.

THE BAD NEWS

- ▶ The amount of grain it takes to fill an average gas tank with ethanol would be enough to feed a person for a year.
- ▶ If the US stopped growing food and converted its entire grain harvest into ethanol, it would satisfy less than 16% of its automotive needs.
- ▶ The majority of US biofuels are produced from pesticide intensive genetically engineered crops (soy, corn).
- ▶ Increasing portions of biofuels are now produced by monocultures of soy and sugar cane in Latin America and palm oil in Indonesia and Malaysia, which have led to massive deforestation, the loss of invaluable biodiversity, and massive outputs of Greenhouse Gases.

THE GOOD NEWS

- ▶ Increasing fuel efficiency by just 3% would reduce US dependence on foreign oil more than all of the agrofuels combined, yet more than 500% more taxpayer money is spent on subsidizing ethanol than energy conservation, mass transit, solar, wind, and fuel-efficient technologies combined.

CONSUMER TIPS AND SOLUTIONS

- ▶ The average American vehicle's fuel efficiency in 1979 was 20 mpg. It took over a quarter of a century for that number to climb to the present day 21 mpg. Technological advances have centered around bigger and faster cars, while fuel economy has been virtually ignored. Ask your elected officials to mandate serious increases in fuel efficiency.
- ▶ Be a fuel efficient driver. You can improve your gas mileage by up to 30% by avoiding jerky accelerations, driving 5-10 mph below the posted highway speed limit and keeping up with vehicle maintenance (fuel filter, tire pressure, oil change, and alignment).
- ▶ When purchasing biofuels, look for fuel that is domestically grown and sustainably produced.
- ▶ Drive Less: Carpool, consolidate trips, walk, bus, bike, train.



QUICK QUOTES

"Farmers are seeing little of the huge profits ethanol refiners like Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) are banking... ADM will earn an estimated \$1.3 billion from ethanol alone in the 2007 fiscal year."
-from the *New York Times* article: *How ADM Makes a Killing on Ethanol*.

"The US, in a misguided effort to reduce its oil insecurity by converting grain into fuel for cars, is generating global food insecurity on a scale never seen before."
-Economist Lester Brown, speaking to the *Des Moines Register*, 1/25/08

GET ACTIVE: More than a hundred US based and international organizations, including the Organic Consumers Association (OCA), Greenpeace, the Rainforest Action Network, and members of the United Nations, are calling for a moratorium on the **MORE THAN EIGHT BILLION DOLLARS OF ANNUAL GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES** paid to large corporations producing biofuels from industrial-scale genetically engineered crops.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO GET ACTIVE, GO TO
www.organicconsumers.org

