

Organic Agriculture and the Impact of Agrofuels

Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.



Agrofuels are fuels derived from agricultural crops or crop residues such as corn, soya, canola and sugar cane, and oil bearing perennials such as jatropha and palm oil used for the production of energy. Their production and general use, predominantly for transportation, have been globally supported by governments, especially from the US and the EU. They aim at energy sufficiency because of the high price of fossil fuels, as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change.

Even though agrofuels seem to be a good response to these problems, the increase in their global production results in:

- **Reduction of cropping land:** To replace 10% of their fossil fuel consumption, the United States and Canada would have to devote 30% of their current arable land to monocultures producing agrofuels, the European Union up to 70% and Brazil 3%. This practice makes land more susceptible to desertification, erosion and to water scarcity while natural resources and biodiversity are threatened.
- **Food vs. Fuel:** Diverting land from food to agrofuel production endangers access to food. Especially small holders and indigenous peoples suffer from this as they need cash to buy their food instead of growing it themselves. This practice leads to increasing pressure on land, water and other natural resources needed to produce food, thus leading to higher prices of traditional crops.
- **Worsening climate change:** The destruction of natural ecosystems for the cultivation of agrofuel crops releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and also deprives the planet of natural sponges, or sinks, to absorb carbon emissions.



The discussion on agrofuels at a global level is exclusively oriented towards the development of energy for industrial and commercial use, without considering the real needs of the population of the countries in which agrofuels are produced. The discussion should instead deal with local energy production through e.g. biodigestors at farms for their own use.



Energy production could be sustainable in combination with Organic Agriculture provided its way of production fits the Principles:

- **Health:** rotating with organic food crops in a way that complements food production and improves the natural and social environment of people involved. The food versus fuel controversy is minimized.
- **Ecology:** fitting in the recycling system of natural wastes, e.g. by first using green waste for gas production, after which the slurry can be brought back into the farming system.
- **Fairness:** contributing to self sufficiency and access to food and energy in those areas increasingly threatened by food insecurity and poverty. Agrofuel production should offer a direct involvement of all stakeholders in the production chain.
- **Care:** helping to care for the land and other natural resources. Some energy crops can be used to restore degraded land, and then this land can be used in the rotation of food production crops.

Promoting organic agriculture instead of agrofuels addresses people's real needs

- **Governments, donor and development agencies** should reorient their policies concerning agrofuels. Governments should end subsidies and development agencies should work closer with the producers in order to support organic production systems that could guarantee local and regional food security.
- **Farmers** should convert to Organic Agriculture so they no longer depend on monocultures, genetically modified organisms and synthetic pesticides and fertilizers which not only endanger their environment but as well their own economic subsistence.
- **Consumers** should change their consumption and transportation habits towards less green house gases emissions and more friendly transportation means by eating more often local organic food and enjoy a train, or a bike, ride.

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OUR GOAL IS THE WORLDWIDE ADOPTION OF ECOLOGICALLY, SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY SOUND SYSTEMS THAT ARE BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE.

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