



## PRESS RELEASE

European Environmental Bureau

### **Biofuels no panacea: EEB urges Commission to keep close watch on wider environmental and social impacts**

(Brussels, 8 February 2006) - - - On publication today of the European Commission's Biofuels Strategy, green group the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) is warning against a forced march promoting biofuels without certainty that all biofuel feedstock production will not harm the environment, in the EU or in developing countries. The EEB recognises that the Commission does declare a commitment to ensuring the environmental sustainability of biofuels policy, but questions whether the political drive to go for a large-scale introduction will leave space in practice for necessary environmental scrutiny. The EEB is also strongly against the gift the Commission is aiming to give the car industry, stipulating that the introduction of biofuels would reduce the pressure to produce more fuel-efficient cars.

John Hontelez, Secretary General of the EEB – Europe's largest federation of environmental citizens' organisations representing some 20 million concerned Europeans – said today: *"This Biofuels Strategy is helpful to assess and discuss the environmental benefits and risks, but we should guard against overestimating the potential of biofuels to combat climate change. Biofuels are just one solution, not a panacea. Much more effective gains in the transport sector would be made by moving forward with technological innovations, increasing fuel efficiency and promoting cleaner transport modes. And biomass can often be used for energy production in an environmentally better way than converting it into a biofuel"*<sup>1</sup>.

The EEB is in strong opposition to the proposal in the Strategy that biofuel consumption could be calculated as part of agreed CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets for cars. John Hontelez: *"CO<sub>2</sub> from biofuels is as problematic for climate change as CO<sub>2</sub> from fossil fuels. The fact that biofuel production also binds CO<sub>2</sub> should be taken as a contribution to further combating climate change, and not for relieving pressure on the car industry to mainstream more environmentally sound models, such as hybrids. We insist that this outrageous idea is removed or rejected by the Council and Parliament"*.

The Commission appears to want to move forward with ambitious consumption levels for biofuels, yet there is no concrete evidence so far of how exactly care will be taken to avoid environmental and social problems in the developing world, such as increased habitat destruction in tropical countries. And whether the EU's cross-compliance system – which is currently implemented in as many different ways as there are member states, with highly variable ambition levels – will guarantee the limiting of environmental impacts of biofuel production in the EU is very questionable. Cross-compliance does not address fertiliser use, for example, which is just one activity amongst many that have negative climatic impacts and deserve urgent attention.

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, the use of biomass for power production leads to substantially greater cuts in greenhouse gas emissions than use for transport fuels, assuming a similar area of farmland is used in each case. Compared with biodiesel 3 to 10 times greater CO<sub>2</sub>-eq. savings can be achieved, and compared with bio-ethanol 2 to 2.5 times more (from: 'Biomass: for vehicle fuels or power generation?', CE, 2003).

**European Environmental Bureau (aisbl)**

Blvd de Waterloo 34, 1000 Brussels, Belgium – Tel: +32 2 289 1090 – Fax: +32 2 289 1099 – Email: [info@eeb.org](mailto:info@eeb.org)

Websites: [www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org) [www.participate.org](http://www.participate.org) [www.chemicalreaction.org](http://www.chemicalreaction.org) [www.zeromercury.org](http://www.zeromercury.org)

Agriculture Policy Officer at the EEB, Pieter de Pous, said: *“Although the Strategy’s impact assessment acknowledges the fact that negative environmental and social consequences could be very significant – especially in developing countries – it is unclear from the current Commission’s proposal how they intend to avoid these effects in a credible way. There needs to be a more sophisticated system than simply playing around with tariffs and claiming that cross-compliance will solve everything. A compulsory certification system for environmentally sound biofuel production, accompanied by reliable traceability, should be put in place”*.

The EEB strongly urges the Commission to deliver promptly on its commitment to ensure the environmental sustainability of biofuels production, and proposes the setting up of a stakeholder forum to advise on the process.

**For further information please contact:**

Pieter de Pous, EEB Policy Officer for Agriculture, Biodiversity and Soil Protection  
Email: [pieter.depous@eeb.org](mailto:pieter.depous@eeb.org), Tel: +32 (0)2 289 1306

**European Environmental Bureau (eisbl)**

Blvd de Waterloo 34, 1000 Brussels, Belgium – Tel: +32 2 289 1090 – Fax: +32 2 289 1099 – Email: [info@eeb.org](mailto:info@eeb.org)  
Websites: [www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org) [www.participate.org](http://www.participate.org) [www.chemicalreaction.org](http://www.chemicalreaction.org) [www.zeromercury.org](http://www.zeromercury.org)