Press Release: Report exposes dangers behind supposed 'climate savior' Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage

13th November 2012 – A new report by Biofuelwatch (1) exposes a new supposed 'climate fix' – Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) as being highly risky, based on flawed assumptions, and largely driven by the quest for more oil.

Capturing and storing carbon from bioenergy is being promoted as a means of removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and thus stabilizing the climate. As the report shows, the claims made about BECCS are deeply flawed: If BECCS was ever used at a large enough scale to influence the climate, hundreds of millions of hectares worldwide would need to be turned into new biomass plantations, which would be disastrous for people, forests and indeed the climate. Yet the costs associated with capturing carbon from power stations and pumping it into geological formations are so high that despite large subsidies from the US and other governments, only a few demonstration projects exist so far, worldwide.

An industry analysis undertaken by Biofuelwatch reveals that the key vested interests behind BECCS come from the oil industry and their allies, including the US Department of Energy: Oil companies are increasingly looking to them for cheap supplies of CO_2 which they can pump into oil fields to exploit oil which would otherwise remain safely under the ground. (2) Ethanol fermentation in particular offers a relatively cheap source of such CO_2.

Rachel Smolker, lead author of the Biofuelwatch report sates: "Ethanol is already responsible for driving up food prices, causing millions more people to go hungry. BECCS could soon link it to the burning of vast quantities of particularly dirty oil which would otherwise remain safely locked up from the atmosphere. Calling this 'carbon negative' as proponents do is worse than ironic."

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Footnotes:

(1) Biofuelwatch is a US and UK based research and campaign organization which works to raise awareness of the negative impacts of industrial biofuels and bioenergy on biodiversity, human rights, food sovereignty and climate change (www.biofuelwatch.org.uk). The new report, **'**BECCS: Climate Saviour or Dangerous Hype?' is available at www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2012/beccs_report/

(2) CO_2 flooding of partially depleted oil reserves has been used in the US since 1972, however it has so far largely relied on CO_2 from a small number of natural geological CO_2 reserves. Long-distance transport of CO_2 is difficult and highly expensive; hence

this method has so far only been used at a limited scale. The US Department of Energy expects that carbon capture, for example from ethanol, could supply enough CO2 to extend the productive life of US and other oil fields by many decades.

Additional background:

- Problems with BECCS as it is promoted for climate change mitigation and geoengineering include the following:

- The enormous quantities of biomass required will result in deforestation and expanding industrial monocultures, as well as increased use of fertilizers and agrochemicals, soil, water and biodiversity losses.

- The "carbon neutral" claim has been repeatedly and scientifically refuted. If bioenergy processes are not carbon neutral, then burying their emissions cannot render them carbon negative. Certainly it is incorrect to assume all (if any) processes are carbon neutral.

- Capturing CO2 is itself energy intensive, adding to energy demand and expense.

- Underground storage of CO2 is extremely risky given that CO2 is toxic in high concentrations. It is virtually impossible to guarantee into the future that CO2 will not leak from storage sites and/or pipelines.