

Biofuelwatch Newsletter March 2015

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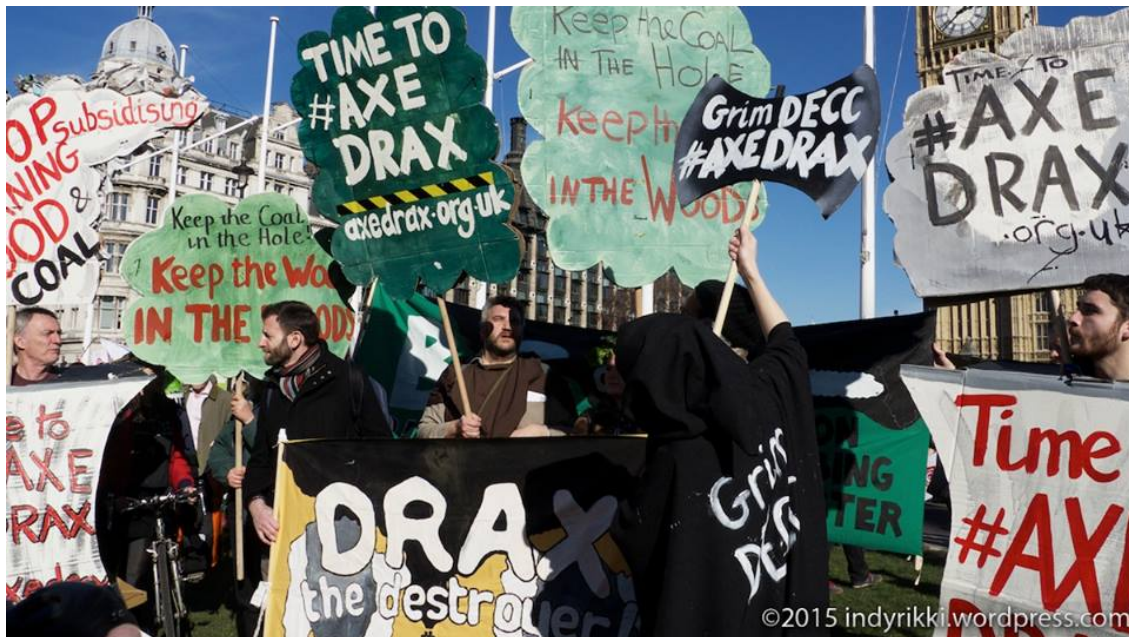
biofuelwatch



Dear subscriber, this is the March edition of our newsletter, with news of our campaigns, the campaigns we support, and important policy developments.

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1. **Axe Drax!**

[Website](#)

Interested in hosting a talk about the impacts of biomass power stations, biofuels or large-scale bioenergy in general? If you're in the UK please contact us and we will try and get a speaker.

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#axedrax protest in April by participating in events including:

- **“Biomass and Coal” Burning the future** public meeting
- **#axedrax Pancake Challenge**
- **Time to Act climate march**

Read on to find out more about these events and the #axedrax protest.

Public Meeting: “Biomass and Coal” Burning the future

On the 5th of February, Biofuelwatch, Friends of the Earth, and the London Mining Network, held a public meeting entitled “Biomass and Coal” Burning the Future, at the FOE head office in London. Delegates from US based NGO's, including the Dogwood Alliance, Natural Resources Defence Council, and the Southern Environmental Law Centre, gave a presentation on the environmental implications of the biomass supply chain. They demonstrated that there is no effective regulation in the US and that clear-felling of biodiverse native forests is happening in order to fuel Drax power station here in the UK. This was followed by a presentation from the London Mining Network on the impacts of Drax's continued coal demand on communities living around the vast Cerrejon open-cast mine in Colombia. Biofuelwatch then presented our **#axedrax** campaign, which aims to unite both Biomass and Coal campaigners in protest at Drax's AGM in April.

Drax Pancake Challenge

On February 17th Biofuelwatch launched the **#axedrax** Pancake Challenge, encouraging people to make pancakes bearing their messages to Drax in food form. You can watch our short promotional video [here](#) and view some of the unique pancake creations [here](#) and [here](#). The challenge isn't over,

and send us a picture! Then on Ash Wednesday, Biomassive member, Westley Ingrams, anointed the Department of Energy and Climate Change with ash, asking them to 'repent' of their misguided renewable energy subsidies for Biomass, give them up for Lent and for ever, and effectively **#axedrax**. See the [film](#) and pictures [here](#).

Time to Act climate march

Our London local group of volunteers, **The London Biomassive**, organised a "Time to Axe Drax" bloc at climate march "Time To Act", which took place in London on the 7th of March. In preparation, a productive weekend was spent in the basement of the Friends Of the Earth office. Pictures are available [here](#). Biofuelwatch member, Pete Deane gave a strong speech at the march, announcing the compelling reasons to come along to the **#axedrax** protest in April. See the short video of the speech [here](#).

Axe Drax Protest in April

All of these events will culminate with a massive demonstration of collective opposition at Drax's Annual General Meeting on **Wednesday the 22nd of April**. If you are London based, please plan to take a long lunch hour and join us from **11.00 - 13.00** at **The Grocers' Hall, Princes street EC2R 8AD**. You can sign-up at <http://axedrax.org.uk/>. If you can't make it, spread the word by joining and sharing the facebook [event](#). We are also planning a "Biomass Chain of Destruction" tour before the protest, to leaflet Drax investors in the City of London, as well as a visit to DECC at the end of the working day. If you would like to participate in either of these additional events, please get in touch.



2. Take Action! Ways to get involved in our campaigns

We need your help! Can you lobby your MP on bioenergy issues? Or would you like to join our London local group? Below are some ideas for how to actively support our work this month

Join the London Biomassive

Based in London? Why not come along to our next London Biomassive meeting and help plan the #AXEDRAX protest happening in April? We are meeting on **Thursday the 19th March** from **18:30 - 20:30** at **Ye Olde London pub**, 42 Ludgate Hill, near St Paul's, EC2M. The facebook event is [here](#) and you can join our facebook group [here](#). Please email dl@duncanlaw.co.uk if you can join us. Our current challenge is to convince the Department of Energy and Climate Change that that maintaining biomass subsidies is untenable. Bring your ideas for action!

Lobby your parliamentary candidates ahead of the UK elections in May 2015

contact us at biofuelwatch@yahoo.org.uk to request your lobbying pack and we will support you throughout the process.



3. Drax's new "White Rose" power station

The White Rose Project is a proposal for a new coal power station (possibly to be co-fired with biomass) to be built next to Drax's existing coal and biomass power station. The National Grid is considering whether to invest in infrastructure to transport CO₂ from the White Rose site and to pump it underneath the North Sea in a carbon capture and storage scheme.

The project is one of just two "preferred bidders" for a £900 million capital grant from the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and the developers have already received £50 million from DECC for a feasibility study. DECC also expects the project to attract a Green Investment Bank loan. If the plant was built and run with CCS, it would be eligible for annual subsidies (Contract for Difference) and for up to a £300 million from the European Commission.

No other country in the world is investing in a scheme like the White Rose project. The particular technology which Drax wants to use has already been tested and shown to be too expensive and inefficient to be commercially viable. Major public funding for a technology which two large energy firms have tested and dismissed as commercially unviable will not make CCS any more commercially viable; it will merely increase the demand for coal and potentially for wood pellets, as well as increasing CO2 emissions from coal mining, from logging and forest degradation (if wood pellets are co-fired), and from the new power plant's smokestack since, at the very most, only 90% of CO2 can be captured. For the first two years, Drax will have no obligation to capture any carbon at all and after that they could get away with capturing as little as 50% from coal - or nothing at all if they decided to run the plant on around 50:50 coal and biomass.

Click [here](#) to read the full briefing



4. Protests against Suzano Papel e Celulose continue in Brazil

In 2013, as part of our report ‘Biomass: The Chain of Destruction’, we published a [field study](#) about Suzano's eucalyptus plantations by the

plantations by the Brazilian pulp and paper company Suzano in the Baixo Parna ba region of Maranh o. Some of the plantations were established for the pulp and paper market and others for pellet production for export to the EU, although plans for a pellet mill in Maranh o remain suspended.

Many subscribers to this list signed a [petition](#) to the state government and to the Brazilian Institute for Land Reform, calling for the legal recognition of the land rights of traditional communities threatened by plantation companies such as Suzano. Late last year, the Brazilian Institute for Land Reform returned land in two areas to traditional communities and the state authorities guaranteed the land rights of two other communities, both of which had featured in the ‘Biomass The Chain of Destruction’ report. This has been a great success for local resistance and of national and international solidarity.

However, Suzano is continuing its efforts to expand its 350,000 hectares of industrial tree plantations, including in Maranh o, where they opened a large new pulp mill in 2014. New evidence has emerged of aerial spraying of agro-toxins by Suzano, a dangerous practice previously uncommon on Brazilian plantations. Aerial spraying contaminates rivers, lakes, lagoons, rainwater,, and soils and is linked to various diseases, including cancer. And Suzano’s efforts to build a new port to export the pulp produced in their new Maranh o pulp mill have been associated with violent land conflicts and the demolition of 16 houses, since the port would be on land which fishing communities live and on which they rely for their livelihoods.

However, the most widely reported conflict involving Suzano relates to their efforts to obtain permission to commercially grow genetically engineered (GE) trees. Read more about this story [here](#).

5. An inspiring story of People Power challenging the advance of GE trees

In the US, it was recently discovered that the Department of Agriculture had quietly approved a genetically engineered loblolly pine, altogether bypassing regulatory processes. They claimed the tree was not within their authority to regulate because no "plant pest" genes were involved in the engineering of the tree. This massive loophole has been used as a convenience and is troubling given many new techniques in biotechnology that could result in a flood of unregulated GMOs.

Following on the heels of this, Brazil's National Technical Commission on Biosecurity (CTNBio) announced that they would make a final determination on deregulation of an engineered eucalyptus developed by the biotechnology company Futuragene.

On the 5th of March, Brazil's National Technical Commission on Biosecurity (CTNBio), met to consider Suzano's application for the commercial release of Genetically Engineered eucalyptus trees. This would be the second commercial release of GE trees anywhere in the world, following China allowing GE poplars to be grown in 2001. The GE trees have been developed by FuturaGene, a company fully owned by Suzano, but registered in the UK.

CTNBio was widely expected to grant Suzano's application. [According to a member of the national MST\(Landless Workers' Movement\) leadership:](#) "The precautionary principle is always ignored by CTNBio. The vast majority of its members are in favour of business interests of the large multinationals, at the expense of environmental, social and public health consequences."

Women affiliated with MST entered Futuragene's research station in Itapetininga, São Paulo state and destroyed the GE eucalyptus saplings on the site. The same day, around 300 peasants protested inside the CTNBio meeting until that meeting was declared suspended by the government, thus stopping the permit for GE trees Suzano had wanted (for now).

Suzano boasts that their GE eucalyptus will yield up to 20% more wood per tree but MST points out that each such tree would need 25-30 litres more water than non-GE eucalyptus (which is already one of the thirstiest trees). São Paulo state is in the middle of the worst drought since the 1930s. MST also warns that those GE trees require large amounts of pesticides, including sulfluramid, which is a prohibited carcinogenic in 152 countries worldwide. Brazil uses more pesticides than any other country in the world.

For videos and photos from these actions, [see here](#)



On the morning of 5 March 2015, 1,000 women took over operations of genetically engineered tree company Futuragene in Brazil. The action included the destruction of GE eucalyptus seedlings.

In February, nearly 200 civil society groups, many of them from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and other countries affected by oil palm plantations, signed an Open Letter to the European Parliament, ahead of a parliamentary committee vote on important reforms to EU biofuel policy. The letter calls for real action to restrict Europe's demand for biofuels and warns that, without such urgent action, the EU's biofuel demand will continue to force the transformation of vital forests, community lands and biodiversity hot-spots into industrial-scale, monoculture, oil palm plantations. See [here](#). However, a final decision on possible EU biofuel reforms is yet to be made – proposals will next be voted on by the whole Parliament.

7. News from local campaigns fighting big biomass projects

Markinch Biomass Power Station in Scotland

On the 5th of March Scotland's Energy Minister, Fergus Ewing, officially opened RWE's Markinch Biomass plant in Glenrothes, the largest dedicated biomass power plant in the UK and one of the biggest in Europe.

In response, residents living near to RWE's biomass plant at Markinch and close to the woodchipping facility in Cardenden, Fife, have spoken out about the impacts they are experiencing from the new multi-million pound power station. Impacts ranging from severe noise and light pollution from the plant to exposure to toxic wood dust at the chipping facility have largely been ignored by the company and local authority.

You can read the news article [here](#)

Please visit the website for the local campaign [here](#)

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