

Biofuelwatch Newsletter September 2017

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**Dear Subscriber,**

**It's been a while since our last update, but as you can see we have been busy. We hope you find lots of useful information here as well as a few things coming up very soon that you can get involved in.**

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## 1. Protest Enviva at the Bioenergy Insight Conference, 4th - 5th October, Edinburgh

On the 4th and 5th of October, one of the world's largest bioenergy conferences - the [Bioenergy Insight Conference](#) - will be coming to Edinburgh.

Attending the conference will be Enviva, one of Europe's main suppliers of biomass wood pellets from biodiverse coastal forests in the southern US and the monoculture pine plantations that have replaced them.

The UK is the world's largest importer of wood pellets, burning pellets made from 15 million tonnes of green wood last year (by comparison, the entire UK only produced 10.8 million tonnes of wood last year).

At this conference, Enviva and other wood pellet companies will try and convince the Scottish Government that burning wood for electricity is clean, green and sustainable: it's not - it heats the climate, destroys precious habitat and is an incredibly wasteful use of wood resources. We need forests to stay standing for the climate, for our health and for the thousands of unique species which call them home.

### **Join us to tell Enviva and the Scottish Government that Forests Aren't Fuel!**

Leafletting delegates 8.30 - 9.30am, protest 12.30-2pm (more details tbc, check [our facebook event page](#) for updates.

We will be tweeting using the hashtags #ForestsNotFuel and #StopEnviva and encourage you to do the same.

Please share the event on social media, and contact [claire.robertson@biofuelwatch.org.uk](mailto:claire.robertson@biofuelwatch.org.uk) if you are planning to come.



## 2. Biofuelwatch to publish report about aviation biofuels ahead of high-level international conference - join webinar on 6th October

From 11th to 13th October, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) will be holding a High-Level Conference on Alternative Aviation Fuels in Mexico City. ICAO is a specialised UN agency which works closely with the industry. Its Secretariat has published a proposed "Vision" which would see 128 million tonnes of biofuels a year used in aircraft by 2040 and 285 million tonnes by 2050. By comparison, a total of 82 million tonnes of biofuels was produced worldwide for all uses last year.

There is a simple reason why ICAO and airlines promote biofuels: greenhouse gas emissions from aviation are growing faster than those from almost any other sector. There are no alternatives to burning liquid fuels in aircraft on the horizon. Greater efficiency cannot possibly cancel out the impacts of growth. Meaningful measures to curb carbon emissions from aviation would be incompatible with a company's shareholder profits. Hence, the industry - and ICAO - have embraced the concept of "carbon neutral growth", which they claim they can achieve largely through a combination of carbon offsetting ([condemned by over 100 civil society groups last year](#)) and biofuels (which, contrary to scientific evidence, continue to be largely classified as zero carbon). There is no possibility of producing the vast quantities of biofuels that would be needed for such an endeavour without disastrous impacts on forests, on the climate, on food prices and food sovereignty, and on human rights and land rights. The prospect of even limited use of biofuels in aircraft is particularly concerning:

has found that the only mature technology for making such biofuels is one that relies on vegetable oils and animal fats. And the only commercially feasible feedstock (except for very tiny amounts of such fuels) is palm oil. However much airlines might prefer to use other types of biofuels, there is no realistic prospect that they could achieve even limited biofuel blend levels without palm oil.

***We will be publishing our report on our website on 6th October. Please tune in to our webinar on the same day (4pm UK time, 11am Eastern US time) to hear an overview and ask questions:***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37g0CcNeRFM>

### 3. #BigBadBioenergy on 18th October

On 18<sup>th</sup> October Biofuelwatch, Dogwood Alliance, FERN, Global Forest Coalition and other allies are planning an international day of action against bioenergy. We will be inviting people around the world to post images to social media with the unifying hashtag #BigBadBioenergy, to demonstrate that industrial-scale bioenergy is not merely a local issue, but also a global one. Our aim is to raise awareness of all the detrimental impacts of bioenergy and call on decision makers to change the policies driving them. We want to reach people all over the globe with this action, as we know bioenergy has far-reaching consequences all over our planet.

We want as many people as possible to take this simple action, so get thinking about things to do in your area! For example, you may want to take a photo of yourself or your community holding up a placard or poster with a message, or show a photo that illustrates negative impacts of a bioenergy-related development near you. Posts and pictures will be uploaded to a central website to show the breadth and strength of our movement to protect communities, climate, and land/forests from industrial-scale bioenergy.

If you or people in your community want to get involved, you can fill in [this form](#) to let us know how best to support you. We also encourage on-the-ground actions!

This is part of the [Reclaim Power](#) month of action on dirty energy.





Photo by Avon Coalition Against Big Biomass

### 3. New report argues microalgae biofuels are overhyped and unacceptably risky

Today, Biofuelwatch released a new report and companion briefing entitled [Microalgae Biofuels: Myths and Risks](#), in collaboration with Friends of the Earth U.S.

The report explores the biological, technological and economic barriers that have prevented the development of commercial-scale microalgae biofuels - despite hundreds of millions of dollars in public and private sector investment over the past decade.

The report argues that genetically engineering microorganisms such as microalgae poses a potentially enormous threat to ecosystems and public health, and calls for an end to public-sector subsidies along with a common-sense moratorium on the commercial-scale cultivation of GE microalgae.

This is the latest in our [Biotechnology for Biofuels](#) series.

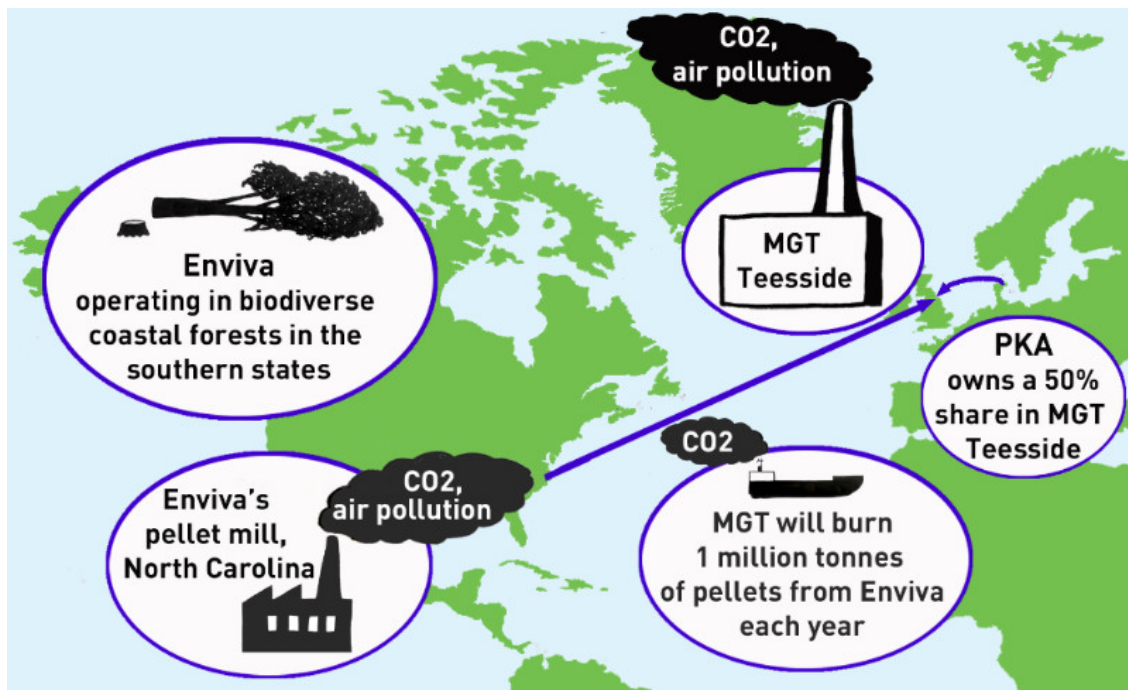
### 4. International NGO coalition calls on Danish

Biofuelwatch, along with US and Danish NGOs, has written to the Danish Pension Fund PKA, urging it to divest from its 50% equity stake in the world's biggest dedicated Biomass combined heat and power plant which is under construction on Teesside. The plant will burn up to 1.5 million tonnes of wood pellets a year, which equates to about 3 million tonnes of green wood.

Approximately 1 million tonnes of the pellets will be supplied by Enviva, a US wood pellet producer known to source wood from clearcut coastal hardwood forests in the US south as well as siting their facilities directly alongside low-income and typically communities of color that are already suffering environmental impacts from a variety of polluting industries.

PKA prides itself on its responsible investment policy, having divested from almost 50 coal companies and from five involved in tar sands, while increasing its investments in 'green energy'. In doing so, PKA has set a positive example to other pension funds and investors worldwide; however, one of its largest supposedly green investments is in MGT Teesside, which will damage forests and the climate and risks undermining the pension fund's reputation.

A coalition of NGOs from the US, UK, Denmark, and Australia have released [a new briefing](#) outlining the negative impacts of PKA's investment on the climate, forests, and local communities and demanding it to divest.



## 5. Drax's biomass conversion and increased particulate pollution



dust particles have increased by 135%. The particulates released each year by the power station are now equivalent to adding 3 million diesel cars to the roads.

Particulates are an especially dangerous form of air pollution linked to a wide range of health problems, including cancer, heart disease and neurological diseases. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said there is “no safe level of exposure”™ to particulates, however the UK government has chosen to ignore WHO guidelines on limits to particulate levels in the atmosphere.

[Read the briefing](#)



## 6. New Contracts for Difference to fund climate change, air pollution and forest destruction

The Government's latest announcement on renewable energy subsidies “Contracts for Difference, or CfDs” contains a shock biomass handout. Most of the subsidies have gone to offshore wind; however, one award has gone to what would become Scotland's largest biomass power station in Grangemouth, and others to controversial “energy from waste” projects. The company behind the Grangemouth award is called Silva Renewable Energy Ltd. According to the Vice-Convenor of Grangemouth Community

planning consent obtained by a Joint Venture of Forth Ports and SSE, Forth Energy, in 2013, against strong opposition from the community.

Walter Inglis, Vice-Convenor of Grangemouth Community Council, said:

“I am shocked and disappointed to see that a company has succeeded in winning subsidies for a huge biomass power station in Grangemouth. Once again, the already poor air quality and public health of residents in Grangemouth is being sacrificed.”

Biofuelwatch assumes that the new plant will run on imported wood chips or pellets, as the nearby Markinch biomass power station already imports “waste” wood from around the UK. The UK currently burns around 50% more wood in power stations than we can produce annually.

CfDs guarantee a minimum purchase price for renewable electricity which is set far above the market price for electricity. Contracts for Difference are awarded through an auction, based on eligibility criteria set by the Government. The Government decided earlier this year that biomass “Combined Heat and Power Plants” (CHP) would be eligible to bid in the auction. To meet the definition of CHP, a power station has to make use of a limited amount of its heat and reach an overall efficiency of just 35%, which is less than the efficiency of most fossil fuel power stations and less than half what could in theory be achieved with biomass CHP.

For more information on Biofuelwatch's response to the subsidy announcement, see <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2017/environmental-campaigners-denounce-new-subsidies/>. Other reports of this story have chosen to focus on the falling cost of renewables, and especially offshore wind. For a useful round-up, see <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-uk-auction-offshore-wind-cheaper-than-new-gas>





## 7. International Day of Struggle Against Monoculture Tree Plantations

September 21st was the **International Day of Struggle Against Monoculture Tree Plantations**, a day to coalesce the movement against the industrial forestry model and its negative impacts, and fight for community rights to land, food, energy, and water.

Biofuelwatch supports the call to stop the expansion of monoculture plantations, as well as efforts to greenwash the industry “whether through carbon offset mechanisms or the fantasy world of bioenergy with carbon capture and storage.

To learn more about the day of action, check out [World Rainforest Movement's Day of Action website](#) and [most recent bulletin](#): *Struggles for land, forests and life: No to industrial tree monocultures!*; [this compilation from Global Justice Ecology Project](#), including an update on monoculture plantations in the U.S.; as well as [Global Forest Coalition's photo essay](#) about the role of eucalyptus plantations in Portugal’s massive forest fires this summer.



## 8. Geoengineering Monitor

Since the **2015 Paris Climate Agreement**, proposals for large-scale carbon dioxide removal via yet-to-be-developed technologies such as bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) have steadily moved to the center of political discussion on climate mitigation. Meanwhile, the **Trump administration** in the U.S. has appointed geoengineering supporters to high-ranking positions, a similarly troubling development that could accelerate the mainstreaming of geoengineering.

In response to these developments, **Geoengineering Monitor** - an online platform co-anchored by Biofuelwatch - released its [first bi-monthly bulletin](#) this summer, aiming to provide a collection of cutting-edge, fact-based news and analysis around these proposals for the large-scale intentional manipulation of the earth system.

[Click here to sign up for the next bulletin](#), which will be released at the end of September in English and Spanish.



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