

Biofuelwatch & Campaign Against Climate Change Joint Press Release:
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For media enquiries, contact:

Biofuelwatch: Emilia Hanna; emilajanehanna@gmail.com (07595768349)
Campaign against Climate Change: Phil Thornhill (07903316331)

Bioenergy opponents denounce latest Renewable Energy support scheme

Campaigners call for an end to subsidies for burning palm oil and wood in power stations

Protesters will gather outside the **Department of Energy and Climate Change** offices at **noon this Saturday 22nd October** to call for the end of subsidies for bioenergy, in a demonstration organised by environmental NGO Biofuelwatch (1) with the support of Campaign against Climate Change. (2)

As a **public consultation** on the financing of renewable electricity launches this week (3), campaigners warn that government proposals to prioritise bioenergy over wind and solar will be a major step backwards in the fight against climate change.

Bioenergy **currently accounts for 82.5% of the UK's renewable energy generation**. But Biofuelwatch and Campaign against Climate Change warn that bioenergy power generation, which involves burning fuels such as wood pellet from Brazil and palm oil from Malaysia, speeds up **deforestation, climate change and land-grabbing** in the global South.

Last month, the European Environment Agency cautioned that Governments across Europe are ignoring the true carbon costs of bioenergy, saying that it can release more carbon emissions than traditional fossil fuels. (4)

However, the new government proposals will support a **boom in biomass and energy crop imports**, as biomass and bioliquids remain eligible for Renewable Obligation Certificates (ROCs). In addition, the proposals include new increased support for the enhanced cofiring of biomass and biomass conversion. Enhanced cofiring refers to stations which combust biomass and coal, but which will switch to full biomass in the future.

Biofuelwatch has estimated that the existing subsidies for bioenergy have already caused a surge of at least 42 new planning applications for bioenergy power stations across the UK, which, if built, will **cost the public £3 billion in subsidies each year**.

Robert Palgrave of Biofuelwatch said, ‘Biomass might have a green, romantic image, with people thinking that it means burning a few logs on the hearth. But large-scale biomass electricity is completely different. The reality is that if the proposed power stations go ahead, they will burn around 60 million tonnes of wood each year and

hundreds of thousands of tonnes of vegetable oil, which will come predominantly from overseas leading to more land grabbing and more forest destruction.'

Earlier this year, the UN identified the UK as the third largest land grabbing country after China and Saudi Arabia with over a million hectares acquired for biofuel production, mostly in Africa. (5) This area represents about 10% of UK agricultural land.

'The government's latest proposals have made things worse,' said Palgrave. 'They continue to heavily subsidise imported bioliquids and biomass, and double the money available for biomass 'co-firing' with coal. Palm oil continues to be treated as a renewable fuel, despite overwhelming evidence that producing it leads to rainforest destruction. These bioenergy subsidies will starve other truly green renewables such as wind and solar, which have had their level of support cut.'

Phil Thornton, director of Campaign against Climate Change said, 'We are at a fork in the road in our journey to escape the looming threat of catastrophic climate change and taking the path towards bioenergy represents a disastrous wrong turning - one that risks taking us down a short cut to calamity. We cannot simply redirect our massive demand for energy from 'fossil' fuels to 'bio' fuels without putting huge pressure on an increasingly scarce and vulnerable resource - namely 'land'. A quarter of our emissions already come from deforestation and climate-negative land use change. The bioenergy revolution will simply ensure that emissions from that sector massively increase, wiping out any gains from reduced fossil fuel use.'

There will be a photo opportunity of local campaigners holding banners outside the DECC offices at the protest at 12.15 sharp. The address is 3 Whitehall Place, London **SW1A 2AW**

Notes to editors:

(1) Biofuelwatch is an environmental and human rights not-for-profit organisation based in the UK and the US working 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

(2) Campaign Against Climate Change is a UK-based grassroots organisation calling for urgent action on Climate Change: <http://www.campaigncc.org/>

(3) Information about the Consultation on the Renewables Obligation Banding Review can be found at
http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/cons_ro_review/cons_ro_review.aspx.

Under the proposals, dedicated biomass support will be at 1.5 ROCs per megawatt hour (MWh) until March 2016. Support for biomass cofiring with fossil fuels continues at 0.5 ROCs per MWh, and support of biomass cofiring with combined heat

and power continues at 1 ROC. In addition, there is new support for the enhanced cofiring of biomass and biomass conversion, proposed at 1 ROC per MWh. Enhanced cofiring refers to stations which combust biomass and coal, but where complete stations will be fully converted to biomass in the future.

Conversely, the wind and solar industries have been hard hit by the proposals: offshore wind will be cut to 0.9 ROCs/MWh, and onshore wind will see incremental reductions to 1.9 ROCs/MWh in 2015/16 and 1.8 in 2016/17. The solar industry will be cut from 2 ROCs/MWh in 2013/14 and 2014/15 to 1.9 in 2015/16 and 1.8 in 2016/17.

(4) The European Environment Agency is an agency of the European Union tasked with providing sound, independent information on the environment to the EU. Its September report on bioenergy found, 'Hence, legislation that encourages substitution of fossil fuels by bioenergy, irrespective of the biomass source, may even result in increased carbon emissions – thereby accelerating global warming.' The full report can be found at:<http://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/governance/scientific-committee/sc-opinions/opinions-on-scientific-issues/sc-opinion-on-greenhouse-gas>

(5) The United Nations Environment Programme 2011 Report, 'The Rush for Land and Its Potential Environmental Consequence', can be found at
http://na.unep.net/geas/newsletter/Jul_11.html