

**To the members of the press – for immediate release**

## The Clean Energy package doesn't come clean on bioenergy

The [Clean Energy package](#) published today by the European Commission does not address the problems of unsustainable bioenergy use that current and previous EU policies have created - it only greenwashes them. European climate and energy policies have been built on the myth that all bioenergy – being a “renewable resource” – is all good. However, as we say in BirdLife, all that is renewable is not sustainable. Burning of biomass still results in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that, in some cases, can even make global warming worse. It has also contributed to significant increased biodiversity loss.

The Clean Energy package could have been the occasion when the European Commission ended the damaging impacts of current bioenergy use such as burning whole trees, stumps and deadwood for bioenergy or the use of food crops for biogas [1]. Unfortunately the Commission didn't take this opportunity and has failed again with its bioenergy policies. This is very alarming considering that bioenergy currently makes up the vast majority (65%) of the EU's renewable energy mix.

The EU has committed to the phase out of food based biofuels and to the ending of their subsidies after 2020, but the new Renewable Energy Directive proposal seems to take a step back, requiring a phase out of harmful biofuels from 7% only to 3.8% by 2030.

The new 'sustainability criteria' for forest biomass only requires minimal national forestry legislation to be in place. Signing up to international climate commitments by countries is not enough to ensure bioenergy really reduces emissions and doesn't lead to overexploitation of forests. Indeed the Commission's own science and impact assessment of the bioenergy policy proposal confirms that continued increase in forest bioenergy use won't deliver emission savings [2].

**Sini Eräjää, EU Bioenergy Policy Officer, BirdLife Europe & Central Asia said:** *“Ignoring science and brushing aside evidence of the destructive impacts of current bioenergy use will not make these problems go away – it will more likely make them worse. The EU needs to limit the use of bioenergy, rather than putting new targets for its use in heating and transport and stop the use of whole trees and land based crops for energy. The European Commission has to come clean on bioenergy.”*

As Europe heads for full decarbonisation and an increasing share of renewables, more caution about their deployment is needed across the different technologies to ensure that they do not harm biodiversity and actually provide genuine decarbonisation.

**Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of EU Policy, BirdLife Europe & Central Asia said:** “Europe needs to get more ambitious, not only about the amount of renewable energy but also about its quality. Stronger safeguards are not only needed to scrap harmful bioenergy but also to ensure wind, solar and other renewables are planned and located in a smart way. Environmental integrity is still missing from the Commission’s Clean Energy Package.”

“Europe’s promotion of environmentally and socially harmful biofuels is a scandal, recognized by pretty much anyone who is not directly making money from the subsidy system. It is time for Europe to turn off the subsidy tap once and for all.”

Long string of scientific studies including by the Commission itself have repeatedly established that biofuels have been leading to increased emissions [3] and biofuels have been repeatedly linked to human abuses and environmental destruction [4]. **ENDS**

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**Notes:**

[1] The Black Book of Bioenergy (November 2016) <http://www.birdlife.org/campaign/black-book-bioenergy>

[2] The European Commission’s Impact Assessment on Sustainability of Bioenergy, accompanying the Renewable Energy Directive proposal highlights for example – based on various scientific reviews of the Commission (according to earlier version seen by BirdLife Europe):

- “Biogenic emissions remain high (higher than emissions from fossil fuels) beyond a policy relevant timeframe for sawnwood, stumps, coarse dead wood.”
- “Sustainable forest management practices (e.g. implemented through national legislation or in the context of certification scheme) play a role in mitigating the risk of overharvesting of forests. As such, they cannot guarantee that an increase in forest biomass for energy will deliver greenhouse gas savings.”
- “[Figure 16 and the assessment in Table 17 show that] the increase in forest bioenergy actually contributes only slightly to the decarbonisation efforts by 2030 compared to the reference scenario, and never by 2050.”.

[3] Biodiesel a cure worse than the fossil disease (May 2016)

<http://www.eubioenergy.com/2016/05/02/biodiesel-a-cure-worse-than-the-fossil-disease/>

[4] Burning land, burning the climate: The biofuel industry's capture of EU bioenergy policy (October 2016) <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/burning-land-burning-climate>

See also Case#5 Colombia in The Black Book of Bioenergy (November 2016) <http://www.birdlife.org/campaign/black-book-bioenergy>

*BirdLife Europe and Central Asia is a [partnership of 48 national conservation organisations](#) and a **leader in bird conservation**. Our **unique local to global approach** enables us to deliver high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of **nature and people**. BirdLife Europe and Central Asia is one of the six regional secretariats that compose BirdLife International. Based in Brussels, it supports the European and Central Asian Partnership and is present in **47 countries** including **all EU Member States**. With more than **4100 staff** in Europe, **two million members** and tens of thousands of skilled volunteers, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, together with its national partners, owns or manages more than **6000 nature sites** totalling 320,000 hectares.*