



Change in EU biofuels policy? First reactions by MEPs

The EU's commitment to green transport spurred increases in the production of biofuels that some say do more harm than good. Should turning plants into fuel be further promoted? We asked MEPs what they think about the Commission's plan to cap the use of food-based biofuels.

Commission plans

The EU is committed to satisfying 10% of its transport fuel needs from renewable sources – mostly biofuels – by 2020. But pressure is mounting to adjust this policy, limiting the amount of fuel produced from food crops.

The Commission recently announced that in the coming months it will propose to limit food-based biofuels to 5% of transport fuel, meaning another 5% will have to come from non-food sources, such as waste or residue feedstock.

MEPs' reactions

Polish Christian-Democrat MEP Jarosław Kalinowski, a member of the agriculture committee, said he supports the plans by the Commission. "The current situation where biofuels compete with typical agricultural food production causes increases in food prices, hence it should not continue," he said.

German Social-Democrat Jo Leinen, from the environment committee, also welcomed the Commission's move, saying that sustainability criteria for biofuels should include environmental and social effects. But he added that the EU should not go from one extreme to another:

However biofuel producers fear that the changes will hurt the newly developed industry and cost thousands of jobs.

"As our 10% goal is still in place, there will be demand for biofuels in Europe in the coming years," said Mr Leinen, adding that more research and investment in more sustainable second and third generation biofuels is needed.

Dutch Green MEP Bas Eickhout, a member of the agriculture and environments committees, said: "Biofuel companies could have prepared themselves for this, since concerns were raised already in 2009 about the indirect impact on land use. Those industries that invested in advanced technologies will profit from these adjustments."