

Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels

An initiative of the EPFL Energy Center

Ensuring that biofuels deliver on their promise of sustainability



Second version of global principles for sustainable biofuels production

October 23, 2007

In June 2007, the Steering Board of the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB) published draft principles for sustainable biofuels production, for global stakeholder comment. Through September 15th, over 100 comments on these principles were collected via the Bioenergy Wiki, in person, via e-mail, and through teleconferences. All of these comments were synthesized and discussed in the RSB Working Groups, who made recommendations to the Steering Board to change some of the principles. The revised version of principles is presented below, for a second round of stakeholder consultation.

The RSB, like most systems promoting sustainable development, has organized commitment into **principles** – general tenets of sustainable production, **criteria** – conditions to be met to achieve these tenets, and **indicators** – elements which enable evaluation as to whether a farm, producer, or company is meeting a particular criterion. The principles are thus necessarily broad, with further definitions and limitations to be defined in the criteria being developed in the Working Groups.

The principles presented below are **highly aspirational**, and represent an ideal performance of biofuels. Obviously, very few biofuel supply chains currently fulfill these principles. The purpose of these principles is to indicate the ideal scenario towards which stakeholders should be progressing. The RSB will develop mechanisms to encourage companies and supply chains to achieve progress towards these goals. The RSB remains committed to incorporating and recognizing other sustainability standards work, to harmonize and reduce any eventual reporting burdens as much as possible.

As previously, the Steering Board is aiming to achieve global stakeholder consensus on these principles. They encourage any interested party to comment on these principles and to become actively involved in the Working Groups. The RSB is **committed to an equitable, open and transparent standards-setting process** that involves various stakeholder interests from many different countries and from all parts of the supply chain.

This second round of comments ends December 31st, so that a next version can be published in the new year. Comments should be made on www.bioenergywiki.net, sent to Sebastien.Haye@epfl.ch, or telephoned in to +41 21 693 0079.

Principles for Sustainable Biofuels

1. Legality

Biofuel production shall respect all applicable laws of the country in which they occur, and all international treaties and agreements to which the country is a signatory.

2. Consultation

Biofuel projects shall arise through fully transparent, consultative and participatory processes that involve all relevant stakeholders.

3. Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases

Biofuels shall contribute to climate stabilization by reducing GHG emissions as compared to fossil fuels. Emissions shall be estimated via a consistent approach to lifecycle assessment, with system boundaries from “root to tank”. This shall include direct and indirect GHG emissions, for instance from fossil energy used in growing, transporting and processing biofuels. It shall also include GHG emissions resulting from land use changes as land is converted to biofuel crop production, or as other production is displaced.

4. Human and labor rights

Biofuel production shall not violate human rights or labor rights, and shall ensure decent work and the well-being of workers.

5. Socio-economic development

Biofuel production shall not violate land or water rights, and shall contribute to the social and economic development of local, rural and indigenous peoples and communities.

6. Food security

Biofuel production shall not impair food security.

7. Conservation

Biofuel production shall not directly or indirectly endanger wildlife species or areas of high conservation value.

8. Soil

Biofuel production shall not directly or indirectly degrade or damage soils.

9. Water

Biofuel production shall not directly or indirectly contaminate or deplete water resources.

10. Air

Biofuel production shall not directly or indirectly lead to air pollution.

11. Biotechnology

If biotechnologies are used in biofuels production, they shall improve the social and/or environmental performance of biofuels, and always be consistent with national and international biosafety and transparency protocols.