



## **Fact vs Fiction**

If you have read or heard about biofuels, you may well have been misled or misinformed. Here are some of the common myths:

### ***We don't have enough crops to produce food and biofuels***

Worldwide there is plenty of suitable land (presently uncultivated) that can be used for producing crops (Source: UN Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO)). The new market for crops provided by biofuels will ensure that farmers in the UK, and in developing countries, get fair prices for what they grow. Not all suitable agricultural land is in use at present and farmers will respond to increased demand by additional planting / production. In addition, the main co-products in the production of biofuels provide high-protein animal feed for the livestock sector which will reduce the amount of land needed to grow dedicated protein crops. If we ate all the food we produced there would be less of a problem, the government's waste and recycling organisation WRAP recently revealed that we throw away around 20 million tonnes of food every year in the UK. (Source: WRAP).

### ***If we use crops for biofuels, people will go hungry***

There is huge potential worldwide for additional land to be used to produce crops, and for growers in some countries to become more efficient (Source: FAO). Sadly, even when Europe had surpluses of crops, people still went hungry. The biggest problems with food supply are not shortage of land but political instability and lack of investment. Some experts believe that the additional markets provided by biofuels could help to stimulate crop production in many

countries, and bring with it investment in infrastructure boosting the economies of these countries. These crops are still suitable for food and can easily be diverted into food production in times of crisis.

***Using crops for biofuels is forcing up the price of food in the shops***

Additional demand for any crop will have some effect on prices over time, but recent rises in raw material (cereals and oilseeds) prices have been as a result of many factors: poor weather, poor harvests and changing diets in emerging economies like China and India. Also remember that the price of raw material represents only a tiny proportion of the total cost of most food products. For example, the cost of cereals makes up only 1 – 5% of the total cost of bread. (Speech by Marian Fischer-Boel, EU Agriculture Commissioner, May 2007) Other costs, including manufacturing and advertising, represent a much larger proportion.

***Biofuels are bad because they are leading to forests being destroyed, and people and animals losing their homes***

There are good ways of producing biofuels and bad ways. Cutting down forests and destroying habitats in order to plant crops to produce food, cosmetics, or biofuels is totally unacceptable. We don't want biofuels produced this way in the UK, and the industry and the UK government will do everything it can to ensure that such biofuels are not used here. Sustainability reporting will be introduced in the UK from April 2008 onwards, and standards will be enforced by law from 2011. The sustainability reports will cover deforestation, air, water and soil quality as well as social effects like the treatment of workers and respect for the rights of local people. We hope that in this way UK biofuels will provide a major driver for sustainable development in all agricultural production in the future.

### ***Biofuels will not deliver the carbon savings that they are meant to***

It is true that **some** scientific studies have shown that **some** biofuels do not deliver the carbon savings that we need to make to help to reduce climate change. However, other studies show that biofuels are much better for the environment, delivering around 50% carbon savings in the UK compared to traditional fossil fuels (e.g. Central Science Laboratory, 2005). The UK government is committed to introducing standards that will ensure that the only biofuels used in this country are those that help reduce climate change. The carbon saving provided by every litre of biofuel will be monitored from April 2008 onwards, and carbon saving standards will be enforced by law from 2010 onwards.

### ***Making biofuels uses more energy than they produce***

This is simply not true. Biofuels are one of the few fuels that actually produce more energy than they use in the production process. Research in the UK has shown that biodiesel can produce energy savings of 97% compared to normal diesel, if the rapemeal which is produced as a result of the processing is used as a source of fuel. (NorthEast Biofuels Supply Chain Carbon Intensity Assessment (2006)).

### ***Growing biofuels in the UK will cause damage to the environment***

There is no reason why achieving the UK's targets for biofuels production should involve any damage to the environment. Historically the amount of land planted with cereals has been higher. In 2006, the area of land used for cereals and oilseeds in the UK was 850,000 hectares less than it was in 1986 (Source: Defra).

Furthermore, many UK farmers are involved in environmental schemes, specifically aimed at promoting and protecting wildlife. These schemes cover over 7.5 million hectares, out of a total of 18 million hectares, of land in the UK.

***Biofuels in the UK will be grown on 'set-aside' land that should be used to improve the environment***

The whole purpose of set-aside was to take land out of production to reduce surpluses of cereals in the EU, rather than to help the environment, so bringing it back into production now makes sense to meet increased demand. UK cereal growers are very aware of their environmental responsibilities. In addition to environmental legislation that affects all farmers, many take part in voluntary industry schemes which provide additional environmental benefits. For instance, around 90% of the crops produced in England come from farms in the Assured Combinable Crops Scheme (ACCS), a farm assurance scheme that ensures that farmers comply with a variety of standards, including environmental standards on soil, water and air. ACCS is part of the overall scheme which uses the Red Tractor logo that appears on food in the shops.

***The biofuels industry is just interested in money and doesn't care about the environment***

The UK biofuels industry is wholly committed to producing biofuels that are sustainable and genuinely good for the environment. From April 2008 it will have to report on the carbon savings and sustainability of the biofuels it produces, and from 2010 and 2011 respectively standards in these areas will be enforced by law. The UK is leading the world in developing carbon saving and sustainability accreditation. As well as being a positive thing, this also makes good commercial sense.

***We should put a moratorium on biofuels production until we have a way of ensuring that all biofuels are sustainable***

If the UK or Europe decides to put a moratorium on biofuels production, it won't do anything to combat climate change, halt deforestation or feed the hungry in developing countries. Other countries will simply carry on without us and we will have missed the chance to lead the world in introducing enforceable sustainability standards.

***The next generation of biofuels will provide better carbon savings and be more sustainable. We should wait until we can produce these.***

Advanced biofuels made from agricultural waste and from non-food crops generally known as 2<sup>nd</sup> generation biofuels may offer a long-term solution to the world's needs for renewable fuels; however, they cannot yet be produced on a large-scale commercial basis. Huge investment and research is required before this can be achieved. Current generation biofuels will establish a crucial infrastructure and industry. Without a working market for current biofuels it will be all but impossible for these advanced technologies to become commercially viable.

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