

**Global biodiversity mechanisms:
a thematic review of recent developments and future evidence needs**

Strand Palace Hotel, London 20th May 2009

Thematic Briefing

Biofuels

May 2009

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Briefing note: Biofuels

The issue of biofuels has been discussed at the following recent international meetings:

CBD CoP9 (May 2008)

Decision IX/1, para 31: [In-depth review of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity](#)

Decision IX/2: [Agricultural biodiversity: biofuels and biodiversity](#).

Ramsar CoP 10 (October/November 2008)

Resolution 10.25: [Wetlands and biofuels](#).

World Conservation Congress (October 2008)

Resolution 4.082: [Sustainable biomass-based energy](#)

Resolution 4.083: [Industrial agrofuel production](#)

Biofuels and their potential negative impacts on biodiversity have been of high priority for Ramsar and CBD Conventions. The discussions on biofuels are notoriously difficult and progress towards protecting biodiversity and ecosystems from unsustainable biofuels production has been slow.

Notable elements of the various Resolutions include the following.

- Agreement that biofuel production and use should be sustainable in relation to biological diversity and wetlands.
- Concern that increased demand for fuel and energy, including biofuel, will compete with other demands upon agriculture land such as food production and that this will lead to the conversion of wetlands and other threatened ecosystems, including sites previously the subject of restoration projects.
- Recognition that 70% of globally abstracted water is already being used for irrigated agriculture and that biofuel production could increase the threats to water resources and wetlands and biodiversity, including threats to wetlands through their conversion and adverse affects on water quality (RAMSAR).
- Acknowledgement that the conversion of wetlands and other habitats risks releasing high levels of greenhouse gases from the carbon they store and that land use change is already causing increases in global GHG emissions.
- Encouraging Parties to:
 - promote the positive, and minimise the negative, impacts of biofuel production and use on biodiversity and the livelihoods of indigenous and local communities;
 - develop and apply sound policy and regulatory frameworks for the sustainable production and use of biofuels, taking into account their full life-cycle as compared to other fuel types, that contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity;

- strive to ensure that any biofuels policies consider the full range and value of ecosystem services and livelihoods provided by wetlands and the biodiversity they support (RAMSAR);
- share their experiences on the development and application of tools relevant to the sustainable production and use of biofuels and submit examples to the Executive Secretary (CBD);
- conduct deeper study and analysis to assess the potential impacts, benefits and risks of proposed biofuel crop production schemes (RAMSAR).

The Resolutions call for further action, in particular:

- for the CBD Executive Secretary to convene regional workshops on the sustainable production and use of biofuels, aiming at considering ways and means to promote the positive and minimize the negative impacts of the production and use of biofuels on biodiversity;
- to consider at CBD CoP10 ways and means to promote positive, and minimize negative, impacts of the production and use of biofuels on biodiversity;
- for the Ramsar Scientific & Technical Review Panel to review and collate existing best practice and social and environmental sustainability appraisals for growing feedstock for biofuels in relation to wetlands; where appropriate to develop such guidance and appraisals in collaboration with other relevant international organisations;
- to consider further discussions between Ramsar Parties on addressing sustainable biofuel issues in relation to wetlands and to work with relevant international bodies dealing with biofuels;
- for the IUCN Secretary General to continue to support efforts to develop sustainable biofuels, to support the IUCN Commissions in a report that describes how biomass production and use might be sustainably integrated with local livelihoods, to share this information with the CBD and others, and to promote strategies for sustainable and pro-poor biofuel production.

The IUCN World Conservation Congress has adopted two Resolutions in relation to biofuels *inter alia* calling on Governments to:

- put in place appropriate regulatory structures and prior to this to carry out analyses of the potential social, environmental and human rights impacts, including life-cycle analyses of existing and new large-scale biofuel production, and
- immediately suspend all incentives for agro-fuels and agro-energy from industrial monocultures.