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# Agrofuels : trees of Evil, Production of agro-fuels from palm oil

- Député européen (Verts, France) - Mes initiatives - La production d'agro-carburants. Le cas du palmier à huile. -



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**The 2003 European regulation on agro-fuels assigning a target of 5.75% for agro-fuels in the total share of fuels by 2010 is currently presented by the European Commission as a miracle which will allow the EU to achieve the Kyoto goals.**



**Actes du colloque** Le dossier "Les arbres du mal", Politis n°954

Nevertheless, far from being the announced miracle, agro-fuels are currently devastating some countries of the South which - due to iniquitous bilateral agreements - have become producers of agro-fuels for the USA and the EU to the detriment of their own food crops.

Scientists have already sent a strong alarm message: agro-fuels - far from solving the problem of climate change - would be worsening it. The deforestation of vast zones in Southeast Asia or Latin America for agro-fuel crops for export does not only involve an increasing loss of biodiversity. Additionally, the methods employed (peat draining; fires...) seem to be at the origin of a CO2 outburst that is more important than the use of oil by the voracious cars of the industrialized countries!

Human Rights NGO are very concerned, too. Agro-fuels do not only destroy biodiversity and threaten food sovereignty, but multinational companies develop their agro-fuels industries by scorning the most fundamental human rights.

The recent report by Fidel Mingorance for the Belgian Coordination for Colombia is particularly instructive on this point. Taking the case of Colombia where palm trees take every day more space away from bananas fields, the author shows us how multinational companies take advantages of a "traditional" system of land requisition by force in order to extend their surface of plantation. To achieve this, they can count on the support of the paramilitaries who enjoy from a recently imposed amnesty. Expropriations, threats, humiliations, endless working days, prohibition of trade unions; this is the everyday life of the Colombian workers on the oil palm plantations.

Though a global reduction of energy consumption would be the only solution to the threat of climate change, the EU tries to solve its problems in exporting them to the developing countries which are, by no doubt, the losers in this unfair deal. The agro-fuels are not only a threat for food sovereignty through the exploitation of fertile lands for growing them instead of basic food (corn, soya...), they are also responsible for the clash between the humans rights and the profits.

The EU cannot keep a blind eye on those serious infringements of human rights just for the pretext of achieving the Kyoto goals. It is urgent that the EU bans the importation of oil coming from lands requisitioned and exploited by the paramilitaries. The introduction of a certification scheme proving that the oil does not come from land controlled by the paramilitaries, does not completely solve the much broader problem of agro-fuels, but it might help to stop the violations of human rights.