

Workshop on Impact and Drivers of Biofuel Production

Convenors: Otto Hospes (Wageningen University) and Denyse Snelder (Leiden University)

Place and date: Nijmegen, July 3rd of 2009, 9.30-16.00 hours

How to get at location of workshop and summerschool: see

http://www.ru.nl/cidin/research/ceres_summer_school/contact/vm/maps/

(The workshop has code C02 in the morning and D08 in the afternoon.)

Background

The production and trade of biofuels is very controversial and complex. Whereas the impact of biofuel production is contested, unknown or at best providing a mixed picture, many national governments have adopted – and still stick to (!) - mandatory blending targets and/or supportive programs to promote biofuel production. They expect that these programs contribute to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, generation of employment, poverty alleviation and other most applaudable goals.

Strangely enough, many of their bold policies have preceded insights that emerge from empirical research. In fact, a lot of policymaking and lobbying is not based on evidence but on prepossession and gut-feelings. Many national policies have preceded the construction of analytical frameworks or approaches to analyze to what extent effects that are simply attributed to biofuel production, can be attributed to such production at all. Whereas NGOs spread claim to provide quite some inconvenient truth about biofuels, it is difficult to identify to what extent these claims simply included inconvenient lies as well. For instance, are biofuels a crime against humanity or new vehicle of agribusiness-as-usual? In short, there is a lot of talk in town, yet there are very little insights on what drives the biofuel dynamics and what actually happens on the ground

A substantial part of the Babylonian confusion on biofuels is related to the lack of (scientific) knowledge on the main drivers of the biofuel value chain and their global-to-local impact. This is, in turn, partly linked to the lack of transparent and widely accepted methodologies (of how) to analyse these drivers and determine their impacts. Moreover, inadequate interaction among academics, policy makers and development practitioners contributes to the existing knowledge gaps, with the prioritization of biofuel research activities in the academic world not necessarily corresponding to those identified by policy makers or development practitioners.

Objectives

It is against this background that researchers, government officials and representatives of non-government organizations are invited share their views during this workshop for which the following objectives have been formulated:

1. to present and compare country-based evidence on drivers and impact of biofuel production;
2. to discuss and generate approaches and methodologies for analysing drivers and impact of biofuel production as an intersectoral hub or crosscutting issue;
3. to question and identify the role of knowledge in policymaking processes, given the different mandates, scopes, levels, cross-cutting issues and (other) complexities related to governing biofuel production.

Programme

09.30-10.00 Coffee and tea

10.00-10.15 Introduction by Paul Wolvenkamp on key issues and questions of the workshop

10.15-11.10 Impact and drivers of biofuel production in The Philippines

Denyse Snelder, Leiden University

Chair: Gerard Persoon, Leiden University

11.10-12.15 Impact and drivers of biofuel production in Brazil

Otto Hospes, Wageningen University

Marcel Gomes, NGO Reporter Brazil

Chair: Gerard Persoon, Leiden University

12.15-13.30 lunch

13.30-14.30 Impact and drivers of biofuel production in Mozambique

Wilson Leonardo, Wageningen University

Marc Schut, Wageningen University

Chair: Maja Slingerland, Wageningen University

14.30-16.00 plenary discussion led by Paul Wolvenkamp (BothEnds), with a short introduction of 'Can biofuels be made sustainable by 2020' by one of the authors of the report.

For further information on the workshop, please contact

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For general information on the CERES summer school and DPRN workshops,

see: http://www.ru.nl/cidin/research/ceres_summer_school/introduction/