



Working for organic and traditional farmers
in ROMANIA

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Biofuels

Biofuels are any fuels made from biomass, such as bioethanol, made from sugar, corn, or other starches or biodeisel, made from vegetable oils or animal fats. They are billed as a renewable energy source and a feasible replacement/alternative for fossil fuels currently in use.

2 types of biofuels: First generation and second generation. First generation biofuels are made directly from crops or other sources which are grown with the specific purpose of fuel use. Second generation biofuels are produced from resources which have already been used, such as vegetable oil in restaurants. This paper focuses only on first generation fuels.

Why are they a problem?

-They use resources which may be needed for food production. Biofuels which are created with the use of agricultural land and resources compete with agriculture for food production. Limited resources such as land, water, and fuel use which otherwise would have been committed to food production in Romania is instead used to create fuel which is then sent abroad for use in other parts of Europe.

-The reduce biodiversity of the areas where they are grown. Biofuels are made from crops grown with the intention of fuel creation. Therefore, the crops grown are focused only on crops which may be used for this purpose, such as corn and starches. This is monoculture, and is practiced on large farms who do not make efforts to be sustainable, but rather only work for on purpose (fuel production) similar to other large scale agriculture projects.

-It is another way for large agribusiness to threaten small farmers and landholders in Romania. In areas such as Lehliu-Gara in Calarasi country, which has been called the "European capital of biodeisel", companies are buying land from peasants in order to consolidate it and use the land exclusively for monoculture biofuel production, depriving local people of local food sources and cornering the market for agricultural land in the area. Companies consider that Romania is a prime location for biofuel production because it has "cheap land and cheap labor". This is a form of colonialism practiced by all large scale agricultural holdings, but is an even graver threat considering they are not even producing food which can be locally consumed.

What are the solutions to this?

Biofuels must be developed which pose less of a risk to the infrastructure and resources which are designed and used for agriculture. Certain biofuels may provide answers in the future, but as long as they are developed as a competitor to traditional agriculture models and systems, they cannot be seen as a solution to problems today. Eco Ruralis does not stand categorically against biofuel production, but we feel that they need to be developed and obtained responsibly, and in a way that does not threaten the small farmers of Romania. Current projects are unacceptable and we call for the European Union to repeal legislation which mandates biofuel production until biofuels can be produced which are not competitors to agriculture and food production.