

## **No to the agrofuels craze, says campaign group GRAIN**

GRAIN (the international non-governmental organisation which promotes the sustainable management and use of agricultural biodiversity) has just published an analysis of the world's apparent stampede into using biofuels or "agrofuels" as it is terming them.

Agrofuels, it says, are set to cause enormous environmental and social damage, with precious ecosystems being destroyed and hundreds of thousands of indigenous and peasant communities being thrown off their land. And at The Organic Research Centre – Elm Farm, we agree that the world should reject these fuels.

Worse lies ahead, says GRAIN. The Indian government is committed to planting 14 million hectares of land with jatropha (an exotic bush from which biodiesel can be manufactured), the Inter-American Development Bank says that Brazil has 120 million hectares available for biofuels, and lobbyists in Europe are speaking of almost 400 million hectares being available for biofuels in 15 African countries. This is expropriation on an unprecedented scale.

One of the main justifications for the large-scale cultivation of agrofuels is the need to combat climate change, but the figures make a mockery of this claim. According to the US government, global energy consumption is set to increase 71 per cent from 2003 to 2030, and most of that will come from burning more oil, coal and natural gas. By the end of this period, all renewable energy (including agrofuels) will only make up 9 per cent of global energy consumption.

GRAIN argues that it is a dangerous self-delusion to suggest that agrofuels can play a significant role in combating global warming. In fact, the wide-scale cultivation of agrofuels will actually make things worse in many parts of the world, notably South-east Asia and the Amazon basin where the drying of peat lands and the felling of tropical forest will release far more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than will be saved by using agrofuels.

One of the main causes of global warming is agro-industrial farming itself, and the global food system associated with it. Although it is scarcely ever mentioned, farming is responsible for 14 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. Within farming, the largest single cause is the use of chemical fertilisers, which introduce a huge amount of nitrogen into the soil, and nitrous oxide into the air.

GRAIN's special issue of *Seedling* with over 30,000 words of analysis from around the world, plus other resources on agrofuels is available from - <http://www.grain.org/go/agrofuels>.