The implications of the EU Renewable Energy Directive for biodiversity

Project description

The European Union Renewable Energy Directive on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable resources sets a 10% mandatory target for the use of renewable energy in transport and has been causing a significant increase in biofuels production for the EU market. Shared Challenges brought together academics and policy experts from across CCI and beyond in February 2009 to review the biodiversity impacts of EU consumption of biofuels and to identify opportunities, weaknesses and threats for biodiversity conservation.

The group recognised that the EU sustainability criteria for biofuels are a significant step forward in ensuring a sustainable biofuels policy. However, they found that these criteria fall short of mitigating the risks that further biofuels expansion will lead to increased biodiversity loss.

The main conclusions from the workshop were turned into a key message document for decision makers for implementation of the EU Renewable Energy Directive legislation and further development to improve environmental safeguards; and a statement on the potential to secure biodiversity and carbon benefits through trade agreements. These were used as advocacy material to highlight the potential pitfalls of this legislation on biodiversity.

In January 2012 a follow-up workshop brought together people from across CCI, JNCC and WWF to share perspectives on ‘no go areas’ for biofuels, discuss ‘no go’ provisions in the EU Renewable Energy Directive and to start planning collaborative input to the review of the legislation in 2014. As a result, two pieces of collaborative research have been developed, to review evidence on the impact of EU biofuels policy and help formulate recommendations for the RED review.

Key activities

- A workshop (27th February 2009) reviewed the biodiversity impacts of EU consumption of biofuels and to identify opportunities, weaknesses and threats for biodiversity conservation.
Catalyzed project
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Project aims
This project originally aimed to provide CCI input into EU legislation related to the Renewable Energy Directive in 2010. In 2012, a follow-on project aimed to review the Renewable Energy Directive and to share perspectives on ‘no-go areas’ for biofuels.

Outputs
Outputs from the workshop in 2009 included:

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<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Key messages: Biodiversity conservation and the EU sustainability criteria for biofuels</td>
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<td>Policy brief: A statement on the potential to secure biodiversity and carbon benefits through trade agreements</td>
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Conservation impact
The outputs from the workshop in 2009 were sent to the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and the UK Department of Transport. The report was used as advocacy material to highlight the potential pitfalls of this legislation on biodiversity. It also helped to shape the direction of the advice that IUCN gave the European Commission on the implementation of protected area and renewable grassland criteria.

In follow up to the workshop in 2012, proposals for two pieces of collaborative research have been developed, to review evidence on the impact of EU biofuels policy and help formulate recommendations for the review of the Renewable Energy Directive in 2014.

CCI partners involved:
- RSPB
- BirdLife International
- Fauna and Flora International (FFI)
- British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)
- UNEP-WCMC
- Departments in the University of Cambridge, including Zoology and Geography

Other organisations
- WWF-UK
- The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)
- The Department of Transport

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