



Ethanol not the panacea some say

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March 29, 2007

"In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes an act of rebellion." George Orwell

As various governments and corporations reach out for an alternative to fossil fuels such as oil, gas or coal the pet fuel from Brazil to the United States and Canada appears to be ethanol.

Ethanol and biodiesel, as you probably know, are derived from various sources such as soybeans, corn or sugar-cane.

It has been possible to buy gasoline with ethanol for many years in Canada, and usually it represents less than five percent of what you put into your gas tank. It is advertised as being "earth friendly." In other words, our government wishes to represent it as a clean alternative to oil from which gasoline is manufactured.

We are rarely told that a considerable amount of fossil fuels are used to create ethanol. In fact, to produce some kinds of ethanol (corn, for example) takes so much energy that there is little benefit in using it as an alternative to fossil fuels. (Alberta's tar sands have been criticized for the same reasons.)

The real cost of producing biofuels is made clearer if the massive deforestation now taking place to plant palm oil trees or sugar cane is put into the energy equation.

It is not difficult to realize what is happening to the Amazon or the Indonesian rainforests in pursuit of this "clean" form of energy: the forests are being destroyed.

No one can fool themselves that burning down millions of acres of forest is making the climate change crisis any easier to contain.

It is not only the fact that rainforests are far better retainers of carbon dioxide than sugar cane or palm oil trees, but the world's biodiversity is found primarily in the tropics!

Not for one moment should humans believe that we even have the faintest idea of the biodiversity that the rainforests contain. Will we doom to extinction what scientists are only now realizing to be the incredible wealth of diversity being discovered in the Amazon and elsewhere?

Simply put, the planet is losing its heritage in order to perpetuate one more greedy business transaction.

The U.N Environment Program now urges caution with regards to ethanol as a means to slowing down climate change!

Some countries such as China are clamping down on the runaway desire to use such crops as wheat for fuel.

They are concerned that the prices of basic foods such as wheat are being driven out of reach for its population.

They want to avoid food riots that will bring down the government so manufacturers of biofuels have been told to back off.

On the other hand, corn is king in Iowa and a farmer can get a lot more for a crop as a result of ethanol production.

No one seems to care that corn takes huge amounts of synthetic fertilizers that are made from fossil fuels.

As a voter, don't be fooled into believing that ethanol represents an answer to our energy dilemma.

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