



Media release

10 November 2022

Government's 'sustainable' biofuels obligation bill has gaping loopholes

Community-based campaign group Don't Burn Our Future has hit out against the draft Sustainable Biofuels Obligation Bill introduced to Parliament today for having loopholes that will cause food to be burnt as fuel in Kiwi vehicles.

"Some of our worst fears about the biofuels obligation have been confirmed by the draft bill" says campaign spokesperson Jake Roos. "It does not prohibit food being used as fuel and it gives the Minister of Energy and Resources the power to designate any material as 'waste' or 'residue', meaning these would avoid any scrutiny against the sustainability criteria written into the bill. This is a giant gift to industry lobbyists.

"There is simply not enough suitable waste - leftover material that is otherwise worthless - to make the volume of biofuel that this bill requires.

"Most of the high quality, non-crop, potential feedstocks for biofuel are not waste. Used cooking oil is already collected and used as feedstock for various products and is highly sought after by fuel suppliers to meet biofuels obligations in other countries. Tallow, a by-product from the meat industry, can be made into biodiesel but is a valuable export. Z Energy abandoned operations at its biofuel plant at Wiri earlier this year because of tallow prices, which increased some 400 per cent from around \$450 per tonne in 2015, to \$2077 per tonne in March 2022. Most of NZ's whey is already being made into biofuel.

"This lack of 'true' waste will create pressure by industry lobbyists on the minister to give non-waste materials a free pass, as has happened in the EU, whose biofuels mandate the government is largely copying.

"The EU biofuels mandate has caused havoc around the world due to increased demand for crops and therefore land, met through tropical deforestation and other destructive practices. Efforts to transition their biofuels obligation to a more sustainable footing have failed, due to this fundamental lack of true waste. Even banning the use of palm oil for making biofuel, as the EU has now finally done, will not work as the resulting increased demand for other food oils creates

shortages of them that force food suppliers to use more palm oil. NZ will be no different”

“A strict application of the sustainability criteria described in the bill to every kind of material proposed to be made into biofuels, ignoring any magical get-out-of-jail free claims of being waste or residue, would protect the environment and people from the harms that the government is rightly seeking to avoid. An outright ban on using food crops to meet the obligation is also critical. Otherwise the government risks increasing greenhouse gas emissions rather than lowering them, which is the bill’s stated purpose.”

Roos concludes: “The volume of ‘safe’ material available to make biofuels is so small that any potential positive impact on emissions would be tiny. So the policy is a pointless distraction, highly likely to cause far more harm than good. Therefore we’re calling for it to be dropped altogether. There are far better options to reduce emissions for the government to concentrate on, such as policies to reduce private vehicle use, moving domestic freight by rail and sea and the electrification of transport.”

ENDS

For further evidence see the links in the following web articles:

David Keat’s Blog:

<https://www.greaterauckland.org.nz/2022/07/11/biofuels-in-new-zealand-a-solution-or-a-problem/>

Jake Roos’s Blog:

<https://lowcarbonkapiti.org.nz/wishing-for-fairy-dust-why-the-nz-biofuels-obligation-is-the-worst-kind-of-magical-thinking/>

FAQ:

<https://lowcarbonkapiti.org.nz/frequently-asked-questions-on-the-nz-biofuels-obligation/>

For more information, contact Jake Roos jake.roos@gmail.com 022 6871980

Website:<https://lowcarbonkapiti.org.nz/dont-burn-our-future-stop-the-nz-biofuels-obligation/>

Petition:<https://community.greenpeace.org.nz/petitions/don-t-burn-our-future-stop-the-nz-biofuels-obligation>

Draft bill:

<https://legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2022/0182/latest/whole.html#LMS774791>