

## **Ethical Aspects of Bioenergy – Responsibility of Politics, Business and Society for a Sustainable Mobility**

Keynote Speech by Wolfgang Gründinger at the Panel „Role of Biofuels in the Energy Mix of the Future“, 9th International Conference on Biofuels, hosted by BBE and UFOP, Berlin, January 23/24, 2012

### *Key points*

- Biofuels are widely considered as a key element to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the mobility sector. In the European Union, governments have enacted a minimum share of biofuels in conventional fuels (E10).
- Contrary to a widely held public opinion and severe criticism of numerous NGOs, it is not accurate to blame biofuels to be the roots or main causes of rainforest destruction and world hunger. The rising demand for energy crops represents only one factor among others having its impact on the agricultural market and environmental protection zones.
- In 2007/2008, high food crops prices on the world market provoked hunger revolts in some 70 countries. The peak of food crops prices has been triggered by high crude oil prices, the swelling demand for meat and dairy in emergent Asian economies, and the run of gigantic sums of speculative capital onto the agricultural stock markets, recklessly seeking for maximum profits after the burst of the bubble on the US housing market. The risen demand for biofuels put additional dynamic to a nervous market situation, but did not create this precarious food supply situation. In other words, biofuels cannot be blamed to be guilty, albeit they are.
- The main cause of rainforest destruction is not the cultivation of energy crops but the need of meat and dairy, eaten by the rich population of Europe, America and – recently – the Asian economies. One third of global crop yield is fed to cattle. To produce 1 kcal of meat, some 7-11 kcal of crops must be spent. In comparison to the agricultural area and the amounts of crops needed to produce meat and dairy for the upper wealthy percents of the world population, the impact of energy crops seems almost disappearing.
- There is no right life in the wrong one, and there are no right biofuels in a wrong economic system. The current world's economic system is neither just nor fair or sustainable. In an unethical system, it is a difficult task to implement an ethically well-intentioned policy.
- As long as small farmers in developing countries do not profit from the biofuels boom, no further targets should be implemented that would involve imports of energy crops. Farmers and villages must be the main target group of a global sustainable bioenergy strategy.
- Instead of the inefficient use of bioenergy in automotive engines, it should be used more wisely in highly efficient block heat and power plants to compensate unsteady energy yield of wind and solar power.