



## Renewable Energy for Development

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### Policy Debate on Global Biofuels Development



Photo: Alfred Szwarc

*Women and children carrying fuelwood in a rural area, Senegal*

We are delighted to dedicate this joint issue of Renewable Energy Partnerships for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development Newsletter with Renewable Energy for Development (RED), ([www.sei.se/climate/newsletter.htm](http://www.sei.se/climate/newsletter.htm)) to a policy debate on Global Biofuels Development. This was prompted by the substantial interest and feedback that resulted from an article by a leading UK environmentalist, George Monbiot entitled: "Fuel for nought: the adoption of biofuels would be a humanitarian and environmental disaster". It was published in The Guard-

ian newspaper, November 23, 2004 and immediately generated a highly animated response from the bioenergy community. The current level of oil prices, ongoing trade reforms and associated impacts on sugar producers, the concerns over abrupt climate change and the EU biofuels directive are some of the driving forces which point towards the need for a new biofuels regime. The accumulated experience of the Brazilian ethanol programme, and the successful mitigation of much of its negative impacts, further support the promotion of bio-

fuels on a global scale. Combining bioenergy production with food crop production could bring about a number of benefits including enhancing the rural livelihoods of poor people in developing countries. Continued high levels of agricultural subsidies in industrialised countries have the potential to undermine this exciting potential. The adoption of broader sustainability criteria are urgently needed incorporating new opportunities and strategies for change to resolve environmental, social and economic problems.

- Maria M. Morales

#### Table of Contents:

Comment & Analysis: Fuel for nought: The adoption of biofuels would be a humanitarian and environmental disaster, by <b>George Monbiot</b> .....	2
Response 1 Food for thought - world trade in biofuels offers sustainable food supply and much more by <b>Dr. Peter Read</b> .....	4
Response 2 Reflection about food, feed, fibre and fuel, by <b>Sergio C. Trindade</b> .....	6
Response 3 Agreeing and disagreeing, by <b>Prof. José R. Moreira</b> .....	7
Response 4 Arguments for bioenergy development, by <b>Dr. Jeremy Woods and Dr. Peter Read</b> .....	8
Response 5 Comparative advantage in the production of biofuels, by <b>Francis X. Johnson and Prof. Francis Yamba</b> .....	10
Response 6 Food versus fuel - an old argument that refuses to move on, by <b>Dr. Frank Rosillo-Calle</b> .....	11



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*Corsa flex-fuel vehicle, Brazil*