

Regional discussions
Latin America and the Caribbean
Monday 3 May

Viewpoint of the Scientific & Technological Communities on Biofuels production in Latin America

Programs for producing ethanol and bio-diesel are already in place based on different crops. Biomass production for fuels requires land resources and, in many parts of the world, may have to compete with food production. Moreover, the water footprint of biofuels is a challenge that should not be ignored. Some tropical countries and this applies to Latin America have large tracts of degraded lands that could benefit from the establishment of bio-energy plantations. Planting arid, semi-arid, degraded, and marginal lands that are unsuitable for food production, with non-edible bio-fuels crops would not compete directly with current food production and could help rehabilitate the soil. For large agricultural areas, on a case-by case basis, a scientific, engineering, social, economic and sustainability analysis should be conducted on the comparative advantage of planting food or biofuel crops, especially in the face of the ongoing global food crisis.

A shift towards cellulose-based second generation biofuels using wood and grassy crops would offer greater reductions in carbon dioxide emissions and less land used per unit of energy. However, technical breakthroughs would be required to achieve this.

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