



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

### **First EU sustainability schemes for biofuels get the go-ahead**

Brussels, 19 July 2011 - Biofuels can represent an environmentally-friendly replacement of fossil fuels. However, we need to make sure that tropical forests and carbon rich peatlands are not turned into oil palm or sugarcane plantations. We also have to guarantee that compared to fossil fuels biofuels used in the EU deliver tangible greenhouse gas savings. To this end, the sustainability of biofuels needs to be checked by Member States or through voluntary schemes which have been approved by the European Commission. Today the Commission recognised seven such voluntary schemes: ISCC, Bonsucro EU, RTRS EU RED, RSB EU RED, 2BSvs, RSBA, and Greenergy. This recognition applies directly in 27 EU Member States.

Commissioner for Energy Günther Oettinger said: "We need to make sure that the entire biofuels' production and supply chain is sustainable. This is why we have set the highest sustainability standards in the world. The schemes recognised on the EU level today are a good example of a transparent and reliable system which ensures that these high standards are met."

In order to receive government support or count towards mandatory national renewable energy targets, biofuels used in the EU, whether locally produced or imported, have to comply with sustainability criteria. These criteria aim at preventing the conversion of areas of high biodiversity and high carbon stock for the production of raw materials for biofuels. In practice this means that biofuels made of crops that have been grown on land that used to be rainforest or natural grassland with a unique ecosystem cannot be considered as sustainable. In addition, the greenhouse gas emissions over the whole production chain need to be at least 35% lower compared to fossil fuels. That threshold will increase over time.

## Background

The EU has set itself an objective to achieve a minimum share of 10% renewable energy in transport by 2020. Where biofuels are used to achieve this target, these must meet a set of sustainability requirements. This means that biofuels cannot be produced from areas which have a high biodiversity value, such as protected areas, or from areas that store a high amount of carbon, such as forests or peatlands.

Companies can choose whether to demonstrate compliance with these sustainability requirements through national systems or by joining a voluntary scheme which is recognised by the Commission.

When the Commission has thoroughly checked a scheme against the sustainability requirements and is satisfied that it adequately covers the sustainability requirements of the Renewable Energy Directive<sup>1</sup>, it will give its recognition for five years. Such a scheme verifies where and how the biofuels are produced. If the rules of the voluntary scheme have been met, the scheme can issue a certificate for that product.

After a detailed assessment made by the Commission and various improvements the following schemes were recognised:

- ISCC (German (government financed) scheme covering all types of biofuels)
- Bonsucro EU (Roundtable initiative for sugarcane based biofuels, focus on Brazil)
- RTRS EU RED (Roundtable initiative for soy based biofuels, focus on Argentina and Brazil)
- RSB EU RED (Roundtable initiative covering all types of biofuels)
- 2BSvs (French industry scheme covering all types of biofuels)
- RSBA (Industry scheme for Abengoa covering their supply chain)
- Greenergy (Industry scheme for Greenergy covering sugar cane ethanol from Brazil)

The Commission is currently discussing with other voluntary schemes how these can also improve their standard in order to meet the sustainability requirements for biofuels.

## Further information

The recognised schemes and the assessment reports will be published on the Transparency Platform at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/energy/renewables/biofuels/sustainability\\_schemes\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/renewables/biofuels/sustainability_schemes_en.htm)

Further details on the schemes recognised today can be found in the

[MEMO/11/522](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2009/28/EC