



PRESS RELEASE

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More ambition needed to decarbonise EU transport, energy experts say

Commission should not ignore contribution of GHG-saving conventional biofuels

Brussels – Europe needs a realistic mix of renewable energy solutions – including low-emission options such as sustainably produced European ethanol – if it wants to achieve its goal of decarbonising EU transport, according to speakers at a debate Wednesday.

Experts from the ethanol industry and the energy sector agreed at the POLITICO conference – [“Decarbonizing Europe’s transport sector: on the road to low emission mobility”](#) – that the proposed EU renewable energy policy is counterproductive to that goal, lacks ambition, and is overly friendly to oil.

As part of its [proposed revision of the Renewable Energy Directive](#), the European Commission wants to phase out conventional biofuels, including ethanol produced from corn, sugar beets and wheat. The RED II proposal threatens to remove one of the EU’s most effective tools for decarbonisation of transport – a sector that is currently heavily reliant on fossil fuels.

“We know what the outcome will be if this proposed policy is implemented: Europe will likely be more dependent on imported energy, and most likely not just on any energy but on oil,” said Jan Koninckx, Global Business Director Biofuels, DuPont Industrial Biosciences, in remarks at the event. “Advanced biofuels will not see investors in Europe. After you pull the rug from underneath the conventional biofuel industry, advanced biofuel investors will not step on the same rug.”

The Commission wants to reduce the maximum contribution of conventional biofuels from 7% of road transport energy in 2021 to 3.8% in 2030. Road transport is currently 95% reliant on oil and accounts for 20% of EU emissions.

Other speakers at the debate included Maroš Šefčovič, European Commission Vice-President for Energy Union; Karolina Skog, Minister for the Environment, Sweden; and Adam Brown, Senior Energy Analyst, International Energy Agency.

Skog said the Commission proposal was “not ambitious enough” and pointed out that criticism of biofuels as “food-based” was misdirected. “There are partially and fully ‘food-based’ biofuels that are sustainable” and needed to help decarbonise the EU, Skog said.

“If the EU’s goal is to promote fuels that have significant benefits for air-quality improvement and high greenhouse-gas savings, that fuel right now is ethanol,” said Eric Sievers, Director Investments, Ethanol Europe.

The debate was held soon after the release of an [opinion poll showing that Europeans overwhelmingly want EU policy to support crop-based biofuels](#). That finding contradicts the Commission’s assertion that people are opposed to them – a claim repeated at the event by Šefčovič.

“Commission policy should be based on science and evidence rather than on a misreading of public opinion,” said Emmanuel Desplechin, Secretary General of ePURE, the European renewable ethanol association. “Commissioner Šefčovič claims there is a consensus to phase out conventional biofuels. But it is clear that Europeans support our technology. We also have the facts on our side: European ethanol has 64% GHG savings compared to petrol and is an essential tool for decarbonising EU transport – one that is produced sustainably by European farmers, is available at scale and works in existing infrastructure and cars.”

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About ePURE

The European renewable ethanol association (ePURE) represents the interests of European renewable ethanol producers to the European institutions, industry stakeholders, the media, academia and the general public. Based in Brussels, ePURE represents 39 member companies, with 44 production plants in 15 member states, accounting for about 85% of the installed renewable ethanol capacity in Europe. The organisation, established in 2010, promotes the beneficial uses of ethanol throughout Europe.