

PRESS RELEASE: Fit for 55 needs a biofuels boost

The Commission's proposal leaves room for biofuels such as renewable ethanol to help achieve Green Deal, but should better maximise their potential for decarbonising transport

BRUSSELS, 14 July 2021 – The European Commission's new Fit for 55 package sets important new goals for emissions reduction and creates a solid foundation for reaching them by giving a role to renewable liquid fuels in decarbonising transport. Unleashing the true potential of crop-based ethanol and creating a policy environment that can spark investment in advanced ethanol are must-have components of any realistic roadmap to carbon-neutrality.

“Fully enabling biofuels in the drive to carbon-neutrality is just common sense,” said Emmanuel Desplechin, Secretary-General of ePURE, the European renewable ethanol association. “Even under a scenario in which electric vehicles make rapid gains in market share and the sale of internal combustion engines is phased out, the EU car fleet will consist predominantly of vehicles that run fully or partly on liquid fuel in 2030 and beyond. For these petrol and hybrid cars, renewable ethanol is the most cost-effective and socially inclusive way to reduce emissions. Europe cannot afford to ignore this important part of the equation.”

With the main components of the Fit for 55 package, the Commission should fully maximise the tools it has on hand for decarbonisation – especially the Renewable Energy Directive.

This is the third time since 2009 the Commission has tried to get RED right. With Fit for 55, the Commission finally realises that to succeed it needs to focus on higher GHG intensity reduction targets that drive renewable energy in transport, without multipliers that hide the EU's continued reliance on fossil fuels. Now that sustainability issues have been settled, the EU should unleash the potential of crop-based biofuels and encourage the wider deployment of advanced biofuels.

“The main questions about the sustainability of biofuels were settled after RED II was adopted in 2018 by phasing out high ILUC-risk biofuels,” Desplechin said. “We know that deforestation and outdated ‘food vs. fuel’ arguments do not apply to EU renewable ethanol. So with this revision we should be taking the next logical step and unleashing the potential of good biofuels.”

Other Fit for 55 components should work in concert to promote solutions that make a realistic impact on decarbonisation. The CO₂ for Cars Standards should include more than just one technology and recognise the benefits of using renewable fuels such as ethanol to reduce the carbon-footprint of cars on the road. The Energy Taxation Directive should incentivise renewable fuels, moving away from volume-based taxation to carbon intensity. A parallel Emissions Trading System for transport should complement, not replace, binding national targets for emissions reductions in the Effort Sharing Regulation, and avoid increased fuel prices and social discontent.

Desplechin added: “We look forward to working with legislators in the coming months to re-calibrate these proposals to make Fit for 55 fit for purpose.”

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