

**Borneo Project \* Family Farm Defenders \* Food & Water Watch \* Food First  
Friends of the Earth \* Global Justice Ecology Project \* Grassroots International  
Institute for Social Ecology \* International Forum on Globalization  
Rainforest Action Network \* Rising Tide North America  
Student Trade Justice Campaign**

October 9, 2007

Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
Office of the Speaker  
H-232, US Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of our members and activists, we are writing to urge you to oppose the inclusion of the Senate passed Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) in the energy bill conference report. The Senate RFS mandate of 36 billion gallons of biofuel by 2022 is a massive, five-fold increase over the current RFS. The increase to 36 billion gallons by 2022 will lead to substantial environmental damage and a system of biofuels production that will not benefit family farmers or rural communities, will not promote sustainable agriculture and will not mitigate global climate change.

As organizations committed to solving the global warming crisis, we strongly support policies that will yield immediate and deep greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Achieving this requires dramatic reductions in our overall energy consumption, including substantial cuts in electricity, transportation and heating fuel use, reductions in vehicle miles traveled, and significant investments in wind and solar power. Rather than encouraging a rapid increase in fuel economy through promoting technological advances in automotive technology, including for example plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, the Senate RFS simply enables excessive and wasteful consumption of biofuels to replace excessive and wasteful consumption of fossil fuels.

While small-scale, locally owned biofuel production and consumption can make a contribution toward meeting energy demands, the large-scale expansion of the biofuels industry mandated by the Senate imperils our environment both within the United States and globally. The intensive crop production and processing required to meet this target will threaten sensitive lands – including forests, wetlands and native grasslands – and will harm biodiversity, soil health, water resources and wildlife habitat. Further, biofuels production often fails to provide meaningful reductions in greenhouse gases, and can even increase global warming emissions, particularly when forests and other lands are converted to biofuels production.

Of the 36 billion gallon mandate, 15 billion is reserved for corn ethanol. Achieving this volume would require the use of 34 million acres or over a third of the current corn acreage in the country. The environmental impacts of this expansion would be dramatic. Corn cultivation often involves intensive application of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer, which pollutes water sources, and has already contributed significantly to the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico. It also results in emissions of nitrous oxide, a highly potent greenhouse gas, as well as causing soil erosion. In addition, as corn is processed into ethanol, the depletion of water resources in agricultural regions of the U.S. would be greatly exacerbated.

The remaining 21 billion gallons in the Senate RFS defined as "advanced biofuels," will create their own environmental and social problems. While "advanced biofuel" is the term generally reserved for cellulosic fuels and other conversion technologies, the Senate defines "advanced biofuels" as anything other than corn starch. Unfortunately this includes imported sources such as sugarcane ethanol and palm oil, most often grown in Brazil and Southeast Asia, respectively. Instead of promoting local production and use of biofuels, the RFS allows unlimited amounts of these imported biofuels to meet the Senate mandate. As a result, establishing a dramatically expanded mandate makes it almost inevitable that a significant proportion of the biofuel requirement will be met with imported sources, which already constituted 10 percent of U.S. biofuels use in 2006 despite a significant tariff on ethanol. The environmental and social impacts of these biofuels will be particularly harmful with palm oil-based fuel produced in Southeast Asia and elsewhere and sugarcane

ethanol and soy-based diesel from sources grown in Brazil. Large monoculture plantations in these countries are a leading cause of tropical deforestation, and violation of labor and land rights is also a serious and widespread problem in many producing countries.

While cellulosic ethanol is touted as being more efficient than current biofuels conversion technologies, the purported benefits have yet to be proven and serious uncertainties remain. Cellulosic ethanol is more costly than conventional ethanol and mass production could cause adverse environmental consequences. For example, genetically engineered eucalyptus trees, which are currently under pilot project development for cellulosic ethanol, are invasive species in many areas in the U.S. and abroad, drain water resources and could potentially devastate whole forest ecosystems if genetically engineered material contaminates native forests. Moreover, use of wood from native and restored forests for cellulosic fuel could irreparably harm forest ecosystems in the United States and abroad. The RFS would also include plans to turn trash, sewage sludge and other toxic waste streams into cellulosic ethanol, which would compete with recycling programs and pollute nearby communities. These risky waste-to-ethanol schemes could dominate the market because biofuel production companies would be paid to utilize toxic waste streams rather than purchasing other feedstocks.

The Senate RFS provisions also fail to ensure the purported benefits to family farmers, rural communities, and sustainable agriculture. The Senate RFS creates a massive ramp-up in biofuels use without any guarantee that major industrial agribusiness corporations will not reap the greatest gains from the greatly expanded sector. Indeed, by neglecting issues of market consolidation and family farmer focused provisions like fair prices, food security reserves, and conservation and supply management, these provisions will tilt the playing field in favor of the largest actors in the industry that already exercise disproportionate control over all aspects of agriculture. Expanding biofuels imports would further undercut the creation of a biofuels sector truly focused on family farmers and rural communities.

The climate crisis demands that we make dramatic reductions in our energy consumption, particularly in the transportation sector. The Senate's massive expansion of biofuels production does not serve those objectives. Rather, it will exacerbate environmental degradation from industrial agriculture and further harm sustainable family farming. We therefore urge you to oppose the inclusion of the Senate's Renewable Fuels Standard in any forthcoming energy bill.

Sincerely,

Borneo Project  
Family Farm Defenders  
Food & Water Watch  
Food First (Institute for Food and Development Policy)  
Friends of the Earth – US  
Global Justice Ecology Project  
Grassroots International  
Institute for Social Ecology  
International Forum on Globalization  
Rainforest Action Network  
Rising Tide North America  
Student Trade Justice Campaign

Biofuel Watch – United Kingdom  
Borneo Resources Institute (BRIMAS) – Malaysia  
Carbon Trade Watch, Transnational Institute – The Netherlands  
Center for Encounter and Active Non-Violence – Austria  
Centre for Orangutan Protection – Indonesia  
Ecologistas en Acción – Spain  
Ecology Collective (Ekoloji Kolektifi) – Turkey  
Econexus – United Kingdom  
Ecoropa – Germany  
Environmental Protection Information Center – Uganda  
Forest Friends – Ireland  
Friends of the Earth-Denmark (NOAH) – Denmark  
Grupo de reflexion Rural Europa – Spain  
Rainforest Information Centre – Australia  
Rainforest Rescue (Rettet den Regenwald) – Germany  
World Rainforest Movement - Uruguay

CC:  
The Honorable John D. Dingell  
The Honorable Edward Markey