



# NatureKenya

The East Africa Natural History Society

## Policy on biofuels

**NATURE KENYA** requests the Government of Kenya to urgently develop a policy and regulations regarding the growing of commercial biofuels such as *Jatropha curcas*. In particular:

1. Develop appropriate guidance on sustainable biofuel production before any commercial biofuel projects are approved.
2. Implement the following as a precautionary approach:
  - \* Require the completion of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for any commercial biofuel project.
  - \* Take into account the cumulative impacts of all land use projects within a landscape or catchment – whether biofuel or food production, water and other development projects – when assessing a new project.
  - \* Carry out a cost-benefit analysis to assess whether growing a biofuel crop carries an energy cost as well as environmental and social costs.
  - \* Reject biofuel projects that deny local communities rights to the land on which they live.
  - \* Do not allow biofuel production on land that:
    - Serves as a water catchment.
    - Stores and sequesters carbon and therefore has a role in climate change mitigation. (Such areas include forests, wetlands, woodlands, grasslands and herbivore grazing areas.)
    - Contains rare and endangered species or high levels of biodiversity. (Such areas include National Parks, Forest Reserves, Important Bird Areas, Key Biodiversity Areas and sites qualifying for protection under international conventions.)
    - Is currently under food crops or livestock grazing.
    - Has cultural or religious significance to the local people.

# Policy on biofuels

**Nature Kenya** recognizes the Government of Kenya's concern about Climate Change, and its efforts to promote alternative energy technologies. Biofuels such as oil palm, sugarcane and *Jatropha curcas* have been marketed in many countries as an alternative form of energy. However, that was before the negative effects of commercial biofuels on food production and natural habitats were fully known. In view of what we now know about the devastating impacts of certain biofuels on people and the environment, Nature Kenya requests the Government of Kenya to urgently consider the following:

Biofuels – fuel from living plants rather than ancient ones fossilized as coal or petroleum – have been aggressively promoted in the last decade. Most biofuels, however, turn out to have more disadvantages than advantages. In industrial countries, more energy is used and more greenhouse gases emitted in producing biofuels than the biofuels save by replacing fossil fuels. Tropical forests are cut to plant biofuel crops, thus exacerbating the very problem of climate change that they are meant to solve. Biofuel production was a direct contributor to last year's world food shortage, as farmland was used to grow biofuels instead of crops.

Destroying tropical forests and other natural habitats also destroys biodiversity. Biodiversity encompasses animals, plants and micro-organisms, the genes within them, the ecosystems of which they are part, and the interactions among them. Biodiversity is the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the homes we build, the medicines that heal us.

Take *Jatropha curcas*, for example. South American people used the oil from its nut to make soap or candles, but its use as an industrial biofuel is very recent. What other sources of food, fuel, fibre, or medicine are lying yet undiscovered among the plants, animals and micro-organisms of our natural habitats?



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