Biodiesel industry rubbishes EC work on ILUC

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The European Commission's work on the impact of indirect land-use change (ILUC) associated with biofuels is seriously misguided because it relies on highly questionable scientific studies, EU biodiesel trade association EBB has argued.

In particular, there are "a large number of problems" with the model used in a study conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), according to the author of one of two studies conducted for EBB and presented in Brussels on Friday. This would mean that ILUC emissions have been greatly overestimated.

The IFPRI study is one of several used for the commission's assessment of ILUC risks. It is not yet publicly available but some of its findings have already been disclosed by news agencies. The assessment is due to be released this autumn.

The two EBB studies aim to make sure the commission's assessment does not lead to legislative proposals that could negatively affect biodiesel producers. More stringent sustainability criteria would have a "lethal effect" on the sector, says the trade body.

The commission has acknowledged that there are too many uncertainties in existing studies, which is why it has postponed its impact assessment. According to the leaked minutes of a July meeting, the commission acknowledges the scientific case for ILUC factors but is taking a precautionary approach until the picture is clearer.

As further recognition that more research is still needed in this area, the commission is considering increasing biofuel emission saving thresholds in the meantime to address ILUC risks. But in a letter issued on Friday 150 academics, environmentalists and economists urged it to introduce feedstock-specific ILUC criteria instead.

Follow-up:

EBB press release (http://www.endseurope.com/docs/111007a.doc) plus studies from Kiel Institute (http://www.ebb-eu.org/EBBpressreleases/Review_iLUC_IfW_final.pdf) and (S&T) Consultants Inc