

Fossil emissions underestimated – biodiesel body

ENDS Europe

Thursday 18 March 2010

<http://www.endseurope.com/23554>

The European Commission must review the way it accounts for fossil fuel emissions when devising benchmarks for greenhouse gas emissions under the fuel quality and renewables directives, EU biodiesel producers said on Thursday.

The commission is currently developing a methodology for calculating emissions from fuels through the comitology procedure under the fuel quality directive. A meeting is scheduled for next week.

The reference value for diesel, against which biofuels' sustainability would be judged, is based on assumptions that take insufficient account of the "striking increase" in emissions from conventional and unconventional sources of oil, according to the European Biodiesel Board (EBB). This could ultimately jeopardise Europe's climate targets, the group warns.

It cites a study by environmental consultancy ERA, dated November 2009, which calculates that conventional fossil fuels are responsible for up to 50% more emissions than the reference value for diesel in the current EU renewables directive. For unconventional fossil fuels, such as those derived from tar sands, the difference is up to 150%.

Unconventional fossil fuels are gradually replacing their conventional counterparts, the authors add. By underestimating the emissions from fossil fuels, the commission is giving biofuels a tougher time proving their sustainability, one of the study's authors said.

Raffaello Garofalo, EBB secretary general, said the commission should not place a heavier burden on biofuels than fossil fuels to prove their emissions. The consortium developing the new methodology and reference values for all fuels should welcome representatives from the biofuels and agricultural sector alongside the oil and car industry it already includes, Mr Garofalo said.

The ERA report, which was commissioned by the German Renewable Energy Federation BEE and German Association of Biofuel Industry VDB, also sets out other negative environmental consequences from fossil fuel extraction, including the risk of water pollution from contaminated water brought to the surface during pumping.

