

Biofuel Quandary

Are we fueling war or peace?

The days are gone when most biodiesel was made by small collectives recycling used cooking oil. Even though SeQuential biodiesel is from local sources and has used materials like leftover oil from Kettle chips, and biodiesel is a good first step away from petroleum dependence, we need to be concerned and aware of the rapidly growing oligopoly, corporate consolidation over biofuels.

Before I go into that, I need to clarify the difference between ethanol and biodiesel. Ethanol is derived from corn sugars. Biodiesel is not. Until recently, biofuels supply came primarily from local and subregional markets. In the U.S. as well, most ethanol plants were small and farmer-owned. With the boom and peak oil, big industry started moving in centralized operations and creating astronomical economics.

Overlooked by most national anti-trust laws, giant oil, grain, auto and genetic engineering corporations are forming partnerships and consolidating research, production, processing and distribution chains of food and fuel systems under one industrial umbrella. Biofuel champions are trying to convince us that biofuel crops are renewable and environmentally friendly and can reduce global warming and foster rural development. But the tremendous market power of biofuel corporations combined with the poor political will of governments to regulate their activities make this unlikely.

Deforestation is taking place world wide to provide land to grow mono crops for biofuels. The claim that this is a green solution is green-wash. Forests, which provide oxygen and a filter for clean air and drinking water, cool the planet by storing vast amounts of carbon and help rainfall, are being cleared for ethanol production. Visit <http://ran.org> for more information on rainforest agribusiness. Farm machinery must be manufactured and repaired. Ethanol has to be fermented and distilled. It takes fuel to transport ethanol to other countries and raises greenhouse gas emissions to turn plant biomass into liquid fuels. Visit www.foodfirst.org for more information.

Around the world, paramilitary forces are pushing indigenous people and small-scale farmers off their land, which is then being deforested for mass cultivation of genetically engineered corn, sugarcane, soybean, palm oil and other crops. The agro-fuel transition is based on the 200-year relation between agriculture and industry beginning with the industrial revolution. Now, fuel will compete with food for land, water and resources. Small holder farmers are being forced to move from subsistence farming to export farming. Plantation workers face abuse, harsh working conditions and exposure to toxic pesticides. In Brazil, soy farmers "employ" debt peonage workers (modern day slavery). Initially, cellulosic ethanol seemed like a reasonable possibility. With it we may not have to depend on liquid fuels; it requires no extra farmland to produce. It does not compete with food. What doesn't seem reasonable is that fungi is genetically engineered to produce it by big business wanting to commercialize it.

The corporate Agro-Fuel Transition is *not* inevitable. Will we allow a handful of global corporations to determine the future of our food and fuel systems? Will enough of us form strategic alliances and coordinated action among social movements (farmers' organizations, environmental and farm labor movements, consumer lobbies and boycotts, committed members of the academic sector, etc.)? Will we build solidarity with all countries to return their right to achieve food sovereignty? Will we see to it that the regulation of grain, cane and palm oil industries will be strongly enforced? Will the standards based on limiting land parted for biofuel as antitrust laws be powerful enough to prevent corporate concentration of power?

Will we put enough pressure on EWEB to ensure optimum use of wind, solar and hydroelectric power? In Europe, trains and cars are run solely on electricity. Why not here? Will more of us start using mass transit and lobby for needed changes in public transportation? Will we minimize the use of cars (dependence on liquid fuels), walk and use our bikes more? Will enough working class women and men start dreaming outside the box, awaken to who they truly are and refuse to be exploited and brainwashed into being cannon fodder?

What dream do we wish to empower and believe in? War or peace?

Ceila (Starshine) Levine of Eugene does hospice work and is an artist and composer.



Ethanol has to be fermented and distilled. It takes fuel to transport ethanol to other countries and raises greenhouse gas emissions to turn plant biomass into liquid fuels.

being new to the area, I am hopelessly uninformed about the problems and politics specific to here.

Although I was initially hesitant to engage such an intense article when all I wanted was to see this weekend's drink specials, Mortensen provided a quick 101 to both a specific problem (Rogue River logging) and the problematic history leading up to it (O&C Lands, etc.). As a newcomer, this article gave me an excellent jumping off point for further research and involvement.

It is hard to know what questions to ask when you don't know the basic structure of an issue. All I had before was a gut feeling about the wrongness of messing with forests, and now I have some insight into the complexity of the issue. I commend this article, and I hope that future writers will continue to take into account the fact that not everyone knows all the nuances — or acronyms — of a current problem.

Thanks very much.

*Aurora Hudson
Eugene*

THICK AS A BRICK

Why did Vanessa Salvia waste all of our time by spending half an article (9/27) on informing us of her personal, very subjective experience with what Jethro Tull means to her? But wait — it gets better. She then completes the article with a left-handed compliment in a very resigned manner. It indicates absolutely no musical insight by the author. This is journalism?

This is a classic example of Ian Anderson's favorite lyrical topic: The "critics" who fall over themselves to tell everyone how absolutely awful this act is without any understanding of the field they supposedly cover. Vanessa, check out the lyrics to "Only Solitaire" — that is, if you can pry it outta yer dad's hands.

And stick to previewing and/or reviewing acts you truly understand. The ones all about funny hairdos, various body arts and lifestyle-oriented fuzztone wallpaper.

*Glenn Leonard
Eugene*

MURAL OF HISTORY

I have been a jeweler selling my work at the 5th Street Public Market since 1979. As a long term part of the Market, I understand a lot about its history. The mural that Chuck Adams described so negatively in his article ("Murals, Murals, Everywhere!," 9/6) is actually portraying the history of the Market. I find it not only a beautiful, fanciful and completely original work of art, but I also think it is one of the best murals in Eugene.

The "goateed man" is Wayne, who was a market attendant for many years. The people sitting around the tables are the owners and staff at the time the mural was painted. The "kid with elvish ears" is the son of Malcom Rubin, our operations director. The "randomly appearing faces" are images of Norvy Fogelstrom and his wife, who were the original owners and developers of the market.

As a tenant, I got a lot of enjoyment watching Connie Huston create this mural over a two-month period. Perhaps if Adams had a better understanding of what he was looking at he would have a deeper appreciation of it.

*Robin Mix
Eugene*

SMOKING GUN

Do we really want the smokers to be paying for our children's health care? Smokers are the bad guys now: addicted, dirty, disgusting — we know who the bad guys and gals are in movies now because they smoke.

Shouldn't we all be paying for our children's health, for the future? On the other hand, when folks ask me why I still smoke, I can tell them, "Hey — I'm doing it for the kids."

*AJ Moses
Eugene*

IRRESPONSIBLE BULLSHIT

Your letter "Creeping Paranoia," dated Sept. 27, regarding exaggerated fear of cougars, at Mount Pisgah was most disturbing. The stats the writer used were also misleading.

The fact is cougars very rarely attack humans in the wilderness, but when a cougar finds itself bold enough to hold territory

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