

Dominic Lawson: How can the state justify supporting homeopathy?

Palm oil deal 'a threat to the rainforest'

EC's Renewable Energy Directive will allow greater mix in petrol and diesel

By Martin Hickman, Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Tuesday, 9 February 2010

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ALAMY

A rainforest is destroyed in Borneo. Indonesia and Malaysia are the biggest producers of palm oil in the world

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Hundreds of millions of tonnes of palm oil look set to be pumped into Britain's vehicles despite scientific evidence showing that chopping down rainforests to make way for plantations exacerbates [climate](#) change, according to a leaked report.

The European Commission is planning to increase the amount of palm oil used in cars and power stations under the [Renewable Energy](#) Directive (RED), which is intended to reduce greenhouse gases, suggests the document.

A loophole in the draft communication from Brussels on implementation of the directive would allow almost all palm oil currently produced to be used in vehicles on British roads.

The development – which campaigners warned would lead to fresh bouts of forest destruction in Asia to meet growing global demand for the oil – comes after an intense campaign of lobbying in Brussels by Malaysian producers who feared the EU would ban imports of palm oil for energy.

Britons use 50 billion litres of transport fuel a year, 2.7 per cent of which came from biofuels in 2008-09. Palm oil, which is primarily used in food and household products, already controversially forms part of that fuel mix.

The Government says it is keen to avoid use of [environmentally](#) damaging materials but admits there is insufficient data about the provenance of 42 per cent of transport biofuel used in the UK. Under the RED, passed last year, Britain and other EU states are required to source 10 per cent of petrol and diesel in road transport from renewable sources. Part of that will be accounted for by electrical vehicles but the majority is expected to come from plant-based fuels such as rapeseed, soy, palm and sugar cane.

The EC document ostensibly protects wildlife areas that could grow these plants by banning member states from sourcing fuel from greenhouse gas-sequestering grasslands, [wetlands](#) and forests. But, in a crucial exemption, the protection does not apply to habitats changed before January 2008, meaning the vast majority of palm oil produced may be used, even though much of it comes from plantations that have replaced forests in the past 15 years.

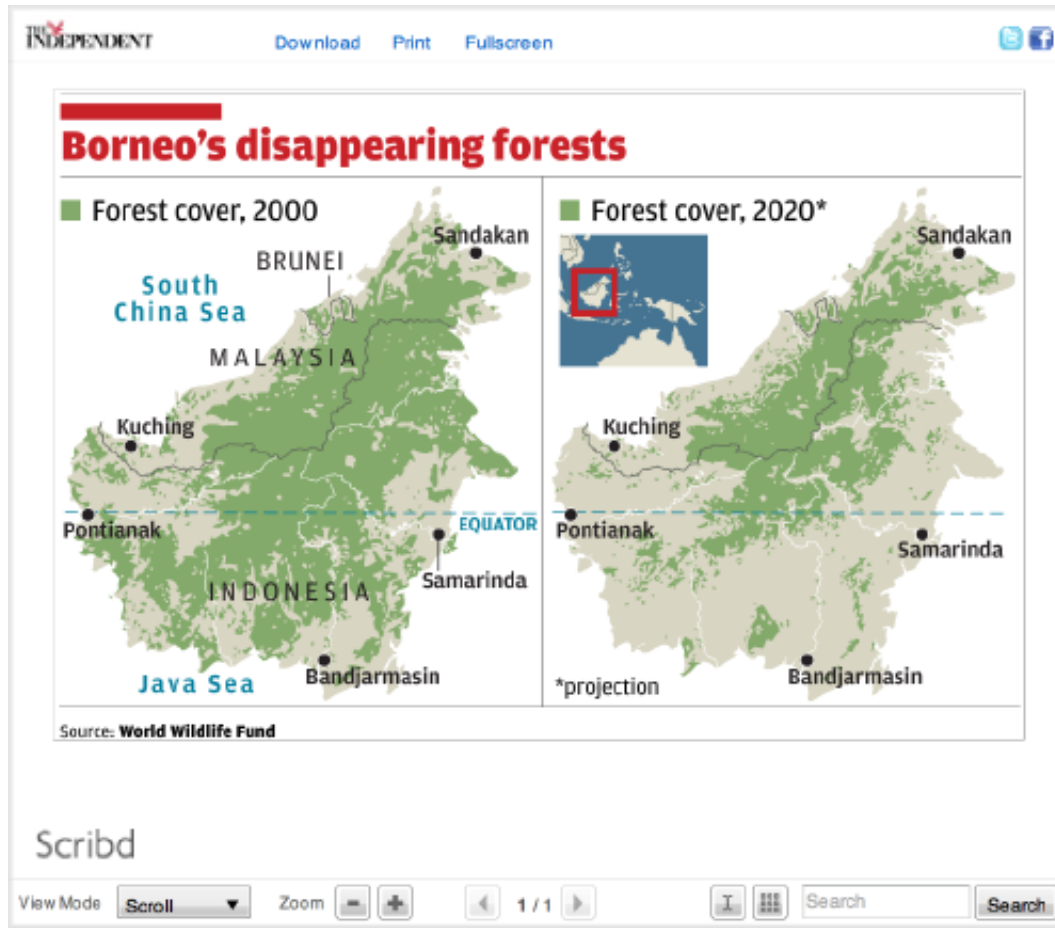
The policy is almost certain to increase demand for palm oil, which can only be grown in tropical climates in Malaysia, Indonesia and other Asian countries, West Africa and the Amazon in Brazil. Rainforests have strong [carbon](#) credentials; they suck carbon dioxide out of the air as they grow.

According to a study by Denmark's Nordic Agency for Development and Ecology, published in the journal [Conservation Biology](#) in 2008, it would take between 75 and 93 years for the benefits to the climate generated by switching to biofuels to outweigh the detrimental effects of converting rainforest to plantations.

Forests in the biggest palm oil-producing countries of Malaysia and Indonesia are rich in rare wildlife, including the

orangutan and Sumatran tiger, but about 90 per cent of an area's flora and fauna are lost when the land is converted to monoculture plantations where the plants are grown in straight lines. Some palm oil producers have also been linked to human rights abuses.

[Borneo Forests](#)



According to a Department of Transport study, palm oil is forecast to account for 45 per cent of Europe's biodiesel by 2020. The EC declined to comment on the draft document.

Friends of the Earth's agri-fuels campaign coordinator Adrian Bebb said: "I know the Commission officials and they're trying to get palm oil in." Robert Palgrave of Biofuelswatch said: "If you expand the palm oil business for food, fuel or cosmetics, more forest will be destroyed."

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Wave goodbye to the rainforest

[cranelake](#) wrote:
Tuesday, 9 February 2010 at 07:58 am (UTC)

What an incredibly short sighted, stupid initiative. Palm oil is one of the biggest threats to the rainforests. To really understand what we'll be losing as a result of this, anyone who has the chance should visit a rainforest. This isn't green thinking, but money talking.

<http://www.greenexplorer.ovi.com/getinspired/south-america/peru/learn-how-to-be-a-jungle-fighter/>

The planet needs all the jungle fighters it can get.

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 **dogspanner** wrote:

Tuesday, 9 February 2010 at 08:26 am (UTC)

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Member

All these people care about is money, As if AGW is a problem anyway. It's the mitigation that is the problem.

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 **genericwaz** wrote:

Tuesday, 9 February 2010 at 09:43 am (UTC)

This palm oiling business has been on the go with the EC for all over the place this many years now. You got to follow the money. This is the way the world goes.

You cannot be standing in the way of the progress. We obviously got to have it away with all this biodiversity quasi-religious nonsense and cover the planet with the high octane renewables. We have to live the moment. Not tomorrow or next week. What the world needs now is combustion.

Obfustadata International is a family company specialist in manufacture of obfustats for all the occasions. We are here offering our fully remunerate services to the EC and any other organisations interested in remunerating us for adduction of the metadata.

You want to hear of my bona fides? Telephone Mrs Victoria Menzies at Bursar Office and ask about the Larry Kiwesi Frimpong bonas.

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Not AGW but mitigation

 **derekcolman** wrote:

Tuesday, 9 February 2010 at 09:43 am (UTC)

**INDEPENDENT
MINDS** 

Member

It is not AGW that poses the greatest threat, but measures taken to supposedly mitigate it. It has already been shown that

the use of plant oils for vehicle fuels causes an increase in deforestation, more starvation, and more extinction. It is not mentioned here, but it is the deforestation to meet the demand for palm that oil has already put Orang Utans under threat of extinction. The increased use of grain oils in petrol has caused world prices of grains to more than double, putting literally millions of people in poor countries at risk of malnutrition.

Now that AGW has been proven to be a myth created by a team of dishonest scientists and green activists, it is time to reverse these stupid policies, and give us our world back.

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Why are we not considering algae oil?

 **erabnier** wrote:

Tuesday, 9 February 2010 at 11:46 am (UTC)

Why no one is not pushing algae oil defies all logic(big surprise) as it can produce more biodiesel and vegetable oil per acre than oil from corn,palm and soya sources.If all of the vehicles in the USA were to run on biodiesel from it would require a mere 15,000 square miles(0.3% of the nations landmass and that not taking into account it can be produced indoors WITHOUT soil and in high rise buildings.This is in comparison to plant sources of the oils which would require 52% of the nations landmass to do the same work.Furthermore the organism can be utilised to store carbon dioxide for long periods of time.Yet again madness and money have the final say.

<http://www.algae-oil.com/>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/03/AR2008010303907.html>

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