

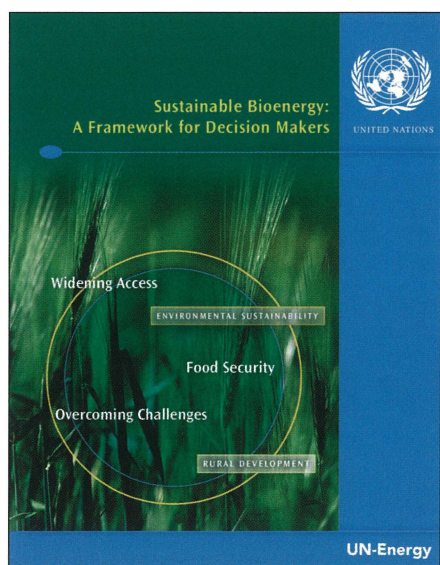
Biofuels Development Could Drive Up Food Costs – UN Report

A new report from the United Nations has warned that the environmental and social damage of using food crops to produce biofuels could outweigh the benefits of reducing the use of fossil fuels.

The report, called “Sustainable Energy: A Framework for Decision Makers” said price increases in major biofuel sources such as sugar, palm oil and soybeans could drive up the prices of basic foods. UN spokesman Gustavo Best said these detrimental possibilities must be weighed against the tremendous benefits bioenergy stands to offer.

The report warned that: “unless new policies are enacted to protect threatened lands, secure socially acceptable land use, and steer bioenergy development in a sustainable direction overall, the environmental and social damage could, in some cases, outweigh the benefits.”

But Best said the biofuel market offered a new and fast-growing opportunity for agricultural producers. “It could contribute significantly to higher incomes and could



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support higher productivity growth in agriculture with positive implications for food availability, sustainability and access,” he said.

The report said bioenergy could potentially save hundreds of thousands of lives annually. “In developing countries, the ‘kitchen killer’, or smoke inhalation from cooking with fuels such as coal and biomass, or wood, dung and crop residues claims more lives annually than does malaria”, it said.

At the national level, suggestions made to decision makers include creating bioenergy policies that take into account availability, access, stability and utilisation. It also recommends that governments weigh the economic and social costs of subsidising bioenergy sources, in particular, liquid biofuels.

The report was the first of its kind to examine the issue of bioenergy through the lens of nine issues including poverty, health, food security, agriculture, climate change, finance and trade. ■