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To:

1. Minister of Energy, Hon. David Parker;
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RE EMISSIONS TRADING SCHEME - ETS - policy & govt plans for biofuels from Brazil

The Pacific Institute of Resource Management, PIRM, a national NGO, based in Wellington, with international links, cannot support the NZ government's policy to source biofuels from Brazil on both ecological and social justice grounds and we advise abandoning this invidious, unsustainable project. This is a short summary of reasons why sourcing biofuels from Brazil (or potentially other rainforest countries) should not be supported.

On 13 May 2008, Brazil's Environment Minister Marina Silva resigned, saying her efforts to protect the forest were losing traction. "For some time I've had difficulties advancing environmental policies," she said in a resignation letter. In recent years, Brazil has become the world's pantry. It's the top exporter of soy, sugar, orange juice, coffee, beef, and poultry, and a growing producer of corn and rice. Last year it exported \$58 billion in farm products, including \$11 billion worth of soy. But an increasing portion of that wealth comes from areas that were once rain forest or savannah, and many farmers believe, expanding production – and profits – will require clearing even more land. Industrialised countries have launched an "agro-fuel" boom, mandating ambitious renewable fuel targets, exceeding the agricultural capacities of their own countries.

It is foolhardy to think countries like Brazil with their millions of under-privileged people, can sustain fulfilling the energy ambitions of rich countries like the US, Europe, NZ, Australia, without unsustainable ecological or social justice consequences. In the past two years companies have been expanding intensive sugar-cane mono-cropping plantations for biofuel production, replacing areas of food production in the Brazilian savannah (Cerrado) region, which is the main hydrological basin of the country. The effects are devastating with diversion of rivers, with no environmental license or technical studies; and destruction of forest reserves. Companies also burn native forests, knock-down and bury trees to escape inspection. The cultivation of sugarcane is near restricted conservation zones of the National Park Serra da Canastra of great biological importance in Minas Gerais. Expansion of sugarcane production has a big impact in the area with its invading potential and intensive use of pesticides.

There are many reasons for finding the sourcing of biofuels from Brazil or any other rainforest country, to be a very unsustainable project for New Zealand or any country, outside Brazil to be involved in on both ecological and social justice grounds. Brazil is a major Amazon country, part of the great Amazon basin ecosystems which play a major part in the Earth's climate system. There is currently great concern about the viability of the Amazon rainforest with current development projects increasing apace. **NZ's project in Brazil will just be one of many taking place in Brazil to support the energy use of rich developed countries, and adding to the Amazon, Brazil's and the**

world's ecological disaster. A new study, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, shows 48% of global deforestation occurring in the Brazilian Amazon between 2000 and 2005. The report also identified several hotspots throughout Latin America and Asia, where study authors say the majority of global deforestation is occurring as a result of pressures from industrial agriculture. With skyrocketing demand for biofuels and agricultural commodities, it's expected deforestation in the future will be increasingly driven by large-scale industrial agricultural projects. Another study (*Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B.*) predicts more than half the Amazon rainforest will be damaged or destroyed within 20 years if deforestation, forest fires, and climate trends continue.

EECA, in an article in *The Dominion Post*, 15 July 2008, suggests Brazil has an enormous amount of "unused," perhaps "marginal land, which it infers can be used without infringing the food rights of Brazilians. Author Elizabeth Yeoman, says NZ is using "only sustainable biofuels," and has commissioned independent studies showing the sustainability of Brazilian ethanol and comments it will achieve "74% reductions in greenhouse gas emissions." Brazil, she says: "is the largest producer and exporter of sugar and the industry is "the fastest growing industry in the country."

Hunger/social justice issues

Has EECA done a study of Brazilian history and the social dynamics? Anyone who knows a little about Latin American countries, like Brazil, realises it's a country of huge inequities where a relatively few rich landowners with vast tracts of land, and millions of impoverished untitled, landless people try to eke out a living growing crops where they can. The same is true of other countries like, Colombia, the Philippines, Indonesia etc. How the landless people of Brazil would like to be given title to some of the vast tracts of "unused" and "marginal" land, owned by a few very wealthy grandees, which rich countries, with heads in the sand, would now like to grow food for their cars, not food for the people of Brazil or whatever country's land is used for fuelling cars in other countries.

Brazil is a country which has shoved its indigenous Indian tribes off their ancestral lands, in the Amazon, for cattle ranches, again, to be used to feed rich people in rich countries. It's also used vast tracts of land for soya production, again to be exported, often to feed pigs in The Netherlands or elsewhere and so to feed people in rich countries once again.

To illustrate the problem, I quote here from a book published in **1992, called *The Politics of Industrial Agriculture***:*[(authors Tracey Clunies-Ross & Nicholas Hildyard:)] "The emergence of Brazil as a major exporter of soybeans has involved tremendous social dislocation within that country. With soya being grown on 100,000 hectare farms, small farmers have been pushed off the land and are left trying to cultivate the strips between the big farms and the roads. This process has resulted in landless peasants colonising the Amazon regions, thus contributing to deforestation. 90 percent of the Brazilian govt's funds for research are directed to export crops and all loans from Europe and the US are to support the development of export crop production. In the 1990s, Bolivia received \$12 million from the World Bank to cut down rainforests and expand soybean production for the same international markets."*

We can be sure the tremendous social dislocation which occurred in Brazil with its emergence in the 1990s as a major exporter of soybeans, will be surpassed with the emergence of Brazil as a major producer of biofuels to feed the cars and transport appetites of rich countries with their very heavy ecological footprints and global warming emissions.

Using biofuels is supposed to be a Green option, reducing global warming emissions from petrol-driven cars. Yet, Jean Ziegler, U.N. special rapporteur on the right to food, in June 2007, said Biofuels could lead to mass hunger deaths and accused the EU, Japan and the United States of "total hypocrisy" for promoting biofuels to cut their dependency on imported oil.

Importing biofuels from third world countries like Brazil can be seen as a phony means to salve the conscience of high polluting/consuming rich countries intent on continuing with their consumption, despite the cost to others. This will simply enrich local elites in Brazil, Indonesia, Colombia, the Philippines and fuel the growth mentality in rich countries, while adding to the misery of landless, subsistence farmers in poor countries whose livelihoods are being ripped from under their feet to make way for biofuel plantations. Using the land of third world countries to feed our transport systems and cars is a monstrous misuse of the land of others, of people disenfranchised in their countries. It is surely a human rights issue and should be everyone's concern.

NB - NZ's ecological footprint in 2006 (probably over 6 now) - 5.9 - is in the top 10 heavyweights (which includes the United States - 9.6, Canada 7.6 and Australia 6.6) out of 150 nations surveyed in the 'Living Planet Report 2006. Third world countries like Brazil, India, around .5 that is 7 times less than NZ's footprint.

yours sincerely

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