

# BIOFUELS AND BIOENERGY

## THE FOOD AND FUEL CONTROVERSY - perceived and real potential conflict of biofuels and food security

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Dealing with food and fuel can be very emotive, because for many people, the use of land to produce fuel instead of food is ethically wrong, particularly when so many people go hungry or are undernourished; there is a large body of literature to testify this. Misinformation, misconceptions, and vested interests, have accompanied the development of the biofuel industry since almost its origins. There are, however, multiple reasons to challenge this misrepresented view of reality. The underlying reasons of why this situation has arisen are multiple. Also, the narrowness of the debate e.g. the focus in just a few feedstocks (maize, sugarcane, cereals), and the geographical dimension [although biofuels are global, just a few countries (Brazil, and USA and to a lesser extent the EU)], are the key players. This has been further compounded by the emphasis of many studies on the negative implications of biofuels without taking fully into account their intertwined nature e.g. agriculture sector, environmental and social implications. More recently the geographical diversity is being enriched by a greater diversification of the feedstock and better understanding of the implications. For far too long the emphasis has been on the potential conflicts rather than to the complementarity of food and fuel production.

The development of biofuels is limited by many factors, but not necessarily by these so strongly emphasized throughout history such as direct land use competition with food production or ethical considerations. The aim of this presentation is to outline the latest developments on food and fuel and the extent to which the debate is overcoming old prejudices. Scientific facts, greater pragmatism and holism should be the main pillar. Also, it should be recognised that much will also depend on factors indirectly linked to biofuels such as eating habits. Innovation in the agricultural sector, environmental, social and policy considerations, will also play a key role.

### Biography

Frank Rosillo-Calle is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow in Biomass Energy, Imperial Centre for Environmental Policy, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Imperial College London. He has been conducting research in Biomass Energy for more than 35 years. His areas of interest are: biomass resource assessment, biomass energy (production, conversion and use), liquid biofuels, agriculture, and food security implications. He has extensive international research experience and has

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