

Biofuels and Food Crisis

Biofuels production has an effect on the global food supplies and prices. Since biofuels can be made from corn, soybeans, wheat and barley, the primary effect of biofuels on food supplies and prices comes due to the increase in the prices of these farm products. This increase comes about because of the increased demand of these products in the production of biofuels. Due to this increased demand, farmers result to increasing the planting of these products and this in turn results to increased prices of other crops competing for the same land. Moreover, increased prices in the products used to make biofuels have a direct impact on other food commodities made from them.

For example increase in wheat prices leads to increase in the prices of flour and hence increasing the prices of bakery products like bread. Increase in Soya bean prices leads to increase in Soya bean oils and margarine products. However, there are world wide arguments especially from the biofuels industries that due to advancements in technology, agriculture can be relied on to provide a reliable portion of the world's fuel as well as be a food supplier. There are also arguments that the current food crisis is dependent on food scarcity since biofuels can be produced through bio-chemical and thermo-chemical processes.

However, studies show that biofuels were the major cause of the 2007-2008 world food crises. Though biofuels cause food crisis, it's argued that developing countries and rural areas in developed countries benefit from biofuels production since electricity is generated in the process. Despite this, biofuels production has a negative effect on poor countries and a positive one on rich countries since fuel demand in rich countries competes with food demand in poor countries. To make this situation more sustainable, biofuels should be produced from non food crops like algae, crop residues and wastes.

References

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