

The ethics of biofuels

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In the world-wide race to develop energy sources that are seen as "green" because they are renewable and less greenhouse gas-intensive, sometimes the most basic questions remain unanswered.

In a paper released today by the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary, authors Michal Moore, Senior Fellow, and Sarah M. Jordaan at Harvard University in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, look at the basic question of whether these [energy](#) sources are ethical.

In addition to arguing that the [greenhouse gas](#) benefits of [biofuel](#) are overstated by many policymakers, the authors argue that there are four questions that need to be considered before encouraging and supporting the production of more biofuel. These questions are:

1. What is the effect of biofuel production on food costs, especially for poor populations?
2. Should more land be used for biofuel when the return of energy per acre is low? Are there better uses for that land?
3. In addition to worrying about the impact of [global warming](#), should we not consider the impact on land of massively expanding biofuel production?
4. What are the other economic impacts of large scale production

of biofuel?

"Policymakers, especially in the U.S., have been in a rush to expand biofuel protection," says Michal Moore. "But they need to start thinking outside of the box of climate change and the corn lobby."

"If policy is designed to create better outcomes for everyone, then we need to subject policy to ethical tests. In many respects, current [policy](#) around biofuels fails those tests."

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