

# The ethics of biofuels

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An article in the current issue of *Global Change Biology Bioenergy* outlines a framework for evaluating biofuels in order to address ethical issues surrounding the rapidly evolving race to develop biofuels.

Professor Joyce Tait, Chair of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics Working Party on Biofuels, and Scientific Adviser to the Innogen Centre at Edinburgh University, reports on the Council's proposed development of a comprehensive ethical standard for biofuels. This standard would address six ethical principles surrounding production of biofuels, including the protection of human rights, [environmental sustainability](#), greenhouse gas reduction, and fair trade. Without these principles, there is concern that rushing to meet aggressive biofuel targets could harm the environment and violate human rights.

According to Professor Tait, "Biofuels are one of the only renewable alternatives we have for [transport fuels](#) such as petrol and diesel, but current policies and targets that encourage their uptake have backfired badly. The rapid expansion of biofuels production in the developing world has led to problems such as deforestation and the displacement of indigenous people. We want a more sophisticated strategy that considers the wider consequences of [biofuel](#) production."

Professor Tait comments that the Nuffield Council urges that the comprehensive ethical standard be adopted worldwide and enforced by a certification scheme. These principles can also be used as a benchmark or model for similar products and technologies.

**More information:** [www.gcbbioenergy.org/](http://www.gcbbioenergy.org/)

Provided by Wiley

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