EU, US should abandon biofuels: UN rapporteur

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"Europe has to do more than lower its targets for production of biofuels as it is planning. It has to have the political courage to abandon them and the United States should do the same," he said on the sidelines of talks in Rome.

"It is dangerous in a situation in which global cereal stocks are so low to set unattainable objectives," he said.

The EU, which is to unveil its new objectives on Wednesday, set an ambitious target in 2008 by saying that renewable energy should represent 10 percent of energy consumption for the transport sector by 2020.

The current share for renewable energy is 4.5 percent.

In the United States, 40 percent of corn goes for energy production.

"Production of biofuels relies on advanced networks for export which rarely benefit small producers since they are in the hands of big business. So their impact on reducing rural poverty is negligible," De Schutter said.

Big companies often do not care much about developing infrastructure and "generally do not keep promises", he added.

Biofuel production has also been accused of serving as a justification for large-scale land grabs.

A World Bank report in 2010 said the sector accounted for 21 percent of land bought in developing countries. A more recent World Bank report said that figure had risen to around a third of arable land being purchased.

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