

Press Release
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Online Debate on Biofuels launched "Subsidizing First-Generation Biofuels is Inefficient"

"The subject of biofuels needs an open discussion about their environmental and economic impacts. Billions of Euros for subsidies, rising food prices, use of land, fertilisers and water are all critical issues", said Jack Short, Secretary General of the International Transport Forum on Monday in Paris on the occasion of the launch of the first web-debate of the Forum on biofuels. "We invite all experts and interested persons to participate in the biofuels debate on our website, the results of which will stimulate the discussion at the International Transport Forum, to be held in Leipzig 28-30 May 2008."

The debate is launched with an introductory statement by Dan Sperling, Professor of Civil Engineering and Environmental Science and Policy, and founding Director of the Institute of Transportation Studies at the University of California, Davis (ITS-Davis), in which he describes the different categories of biofuels and examines their potential to mitigate CO₂ emissions in the transport sector. Questions for the debate concern volume-based targets for biofuels; which biofuels hold the most promise for the transport sector, and whether subsidies designed to reduce CO₂ emissions are best used for biofuel production or better targeted elsewhere.

Ron Steenblik, Director of Research at the International Institute for Sustainable Development in Geneva, was invited to find answers to these questions. From his point of view, volume targets are about "the most blunt instruments" that countries could have devised to promote biofuel use. He regards subsidizing of first-generation biofuels as "inefficient".

Further comments and input will be posted on the Forum website

www.internationaltransportforum.org and a summary will contribute to the 2008 Forum.

The International Transport Forum, part of the OECD family, is a global platform and meeting place at the highest level for transport, logistics and mobility. Key figures from government and politics, business and industry, research and civil society will meet at the annual conference in Leipzig, which has the ambition to become the "Transport Summit of the Year". The first Forum will take place in May 2008 on the theme "Transport and Energy: The Challenge of Climate Change". The involvement of more than 50 Ministers of Transport ensures direct links and strong relevance to policy making at both national and international levels.

For more Information on the 2008 Forum see www.internationaltransportforum.org/home.html.

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