

Assessing land use for biofuels properly

UFOP: feedstock production for biofuels buffers supply to safeguard global nutrition

Berlin, 10 January 2024. – According to investigations conducted by Agrarmarkt-Informations-Gesellschaft (mbH), the total world area planted with cereals, oilseeds and protein, sugar and fibre crops as well as fruit, vegetables and nuts amounted to approximately 1.2 billion hectares in 2022. The largest share was used directly or indirectly, via livestock feeds, for human nutrition. Only around 6 per cent of the area was used to produce biofuels.

At the same time, biofuel production is in most cases very obviously located in places where there is a surplus of feedstock anyway (mainly maize, palm oil and soybean oil). If the option of using the surplus to produce biofuels did not exist, it would have to be placed on the global market, where it would weigh heavily on feedstock costs. The conversion of agricultural feedstock to biofuels reduces the production overhang, generates extra value added and reduces the need for foreign currency for imports of crude oil or fossil fuels. The latter is primarily a problem in poorer countries.

Another advantage of biofuel production is that it also yields high-quality protein feedstuffs, which are in high demand. The share and quality of these protein feeds have a strong influence on commodity prices and consequently on the size of the area planted. This applies especially to soybeans. Biofuels are by no means the price drivers in the commodities markets. In an emergency situation, the feedstocks required in biofuel production will be available for food supply (for example, rapeseed/sunflowerseed oil during the Ukraine crisis). If arable farming were to be intensified for political reasons – an aim the EU Commission is pursuing with the reduction strategy for fertilisers and plant protection products under the Green Deal – this option of "buffering" food demand would no longer be available.

The Union zur Förderung von Oel- und Proteinpflanzen e.V. (UFOP) has pointed out that high-quality protein is obtained as a by-product of biofuel production and used for livestock feeding purposes or directly in the human diet. This aspect is not given sufficient consideration in the debate about global changes in land use. According to the UFOP, the percentage of area used for rapeseed-based protein production should be subtracted and accounted for in the calculation of land required for biofuel production – a figure frequently referred to. The association has therefore urged that this supply and buffer effect in terms of land pressure in third countries should also be taken into account in the assessment of the crop biomass potential as part of the National Biomass Strategy (NABIS). With rapeseed having a share of 60 per cent feed protein, only 40 per cent of the crop area should be allocated to the production of biofuels, the UFOP has argued. From the UFOP's perspective, this would be a fair



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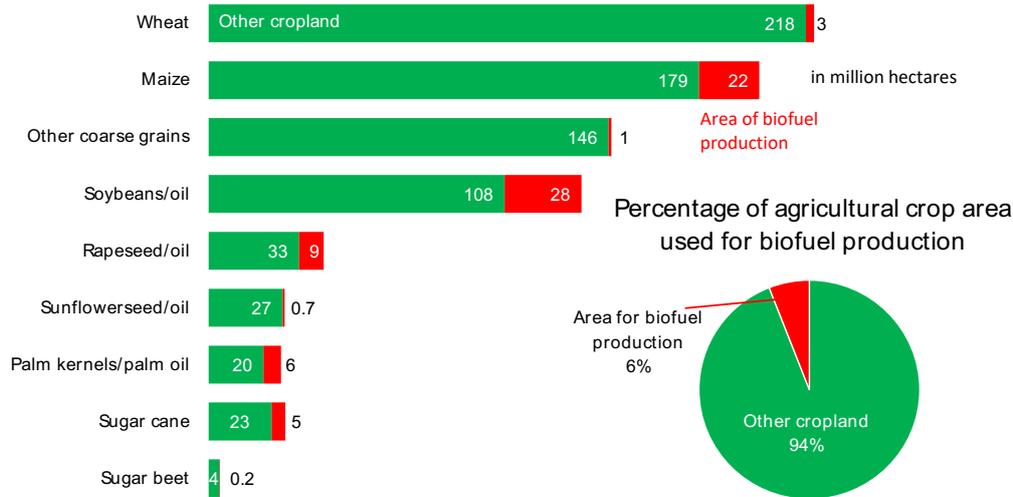
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and proper approach, because missing protein volumes would have to be made up for by imports that would require additional land use.

Shares of cropland planted with selected crops for biofuel production (arable+permanent crops)



Source: AMI, OECD, FAO, USDA, Oil World

Note: other coarse grains = millet, mixed grains, oats

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Quick information on UFOP e. V.:

The Union for the Promotion of Oil and Protein Plants e. V. (UFOP) represents the political interests of companies, associations and institutions involved in the production, processing and marketing of domestic oil and protein plants in national and international bodies. UFOP supports research to optimise agricultural production and for the development of new recycling opportunities in the food, non-food and feed sectors. UFOP public relations aim to promote the marketing of domestic oil and protein plant end products.