# Open Letter to COP30: A Scientific Call to Confront the Risks of the Growing Global Biofuels Demand

**To world leaders and decision makers of the international climate community,**

As institutions committed to environmental integrity, scientific rigour, and climate justice, we, the undersigned members of the scientific and civil society community, are calling on COP delegations and attendees to recognise the dangers of an uninhibited expansion of global biofuels demand.

Biofuels are often promoted as a low-carbon alternative to fossil fuels. On top of current demand from the road sector, ambitious targets from the aviation and shipping sectors, such as EU and national SAF mandates and the IMO Net-Zero framework, are set to ramp up demand considerably. However, mounting scientific evidence reveals that the uninhibited scaling up of biofuel production - particularly those derived from food and feed crops - carries serious environmental and social risks. Unrestricted growth in global biofuel demand without stringent safeguards could derail climate progress, displace communities, degrade ecosystems and deepen food insecurity.

It is projected that by 2030, global feedstock demand for biofuels used in the transport sector, excluding relative areas used for crop co-products, will require 52 million hectares of cropland - a staggering increase of 63% from 2023 levels - equivalent to the size of France.[1] This is an incredibly inefficient and wasteful use of land and agricultural resources. For comparison, only 3% of the current biofuels area would be needed to produce the same amount of energy from solar panels, which demonstrates how highly inefficient burning crops for biofuels truly is.[2]

This projected expansion is expected to:

- **Increase net global greenhouse gas emissions** by nearly 34 $MtCO_2e$ annually[3], due to global cropland expansion and high-emissions crop cultivation, equivalent to nearly 30 million new diesel cars on the road;

- **Displace and disturb natural ecosystems**, especially in biodiverse and carbon-rich regions of South America and Southeast Asia;

- **Consume scarce water resources** and contribute to agricultural runoff, with devastating consequences for soil, water quality, and aquatic ecosystems;

- **Exacerbate global hunger**, by directly increasing food prices, intensifying food price volatility in vulnerable economies and diverting calories from human consumption.

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[1] (Cerulogy, 2024) *Diverted Harvest: Environmental Risk from Growth in International Biofuel Demand*. p.55
[2] (Transport & Environment, 2025) *CrOP30: Why burning food for land-hungry biofuels is fueling the climate crisis*. pg. 11
[3] (Cerulogy, 2024) *Diverted Harvest: Environmental Risk from Growth in International Biofuel Demand.* pg. 4

While some nations may achieve marginal emissions reductions through advanced biofuels or waste-based pathways, the global trend in biofuels consumption remains deeply unsustainable. 92% of projected 2030 biofuel demand is still expected to be met by food-type feedstocks.[4] Meanwhile, even optimistic estimates of biofuel life-cycle savings are often dwarfed by the carbon opportunity costs of not restoring land to forests or other natural systems.

The expansion of crop biofuels is not a climate solution. It is a costly detour.

As COP30 approaches - an opportune moment of global reckoning and responsibility - we, the undersigned signatories, call on world leaders to:

1. **Prevent an uninhibited expansion of first generation biofuels** under international climate mechanisms or national plans;

2. **Phase out subsidies and mandates for biofuels from food and feed crops**, and redirect support to more sustainable energy solutions;

3. **Prioritise investments in electrification and energy efficiency and sufficiency** as primary strategies for decarbonizing road transport;

4. **Prioritise land restoration and biodiversity protection** over land conversion for fuel production;

5. **Establish robust global sustainability criteria, verification procedures and sufficient enforcement frameworks** that justifiably account for indirect emissions, carbon opportunity costs and social impacts. This is highly relevant for exploring sustainable fuel alternatives within international aviation and shipping decarbonization frameworks, such as CORSIA and IMO.

Truly sustainable biofuels can play a limited role in decarbonising a narrow set of hard-to-electrify sectors, such as aviation, but this must not justify a blind embrace of policies that repeat past mistakes of relentless crop biofuels expansion.

The science is clear: we cannot burn our way to net zero - especially not at the expense of forests, food and future generations.

We urge you to reflect on this science in the decisions made at COP30.

**Signed,**

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[4] (Cerulogy, 2024) *Diverted Harvest: Environmental Risk from Growth in International Biofuel Demand.* Pg. 3

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