

# Extend Senate Hearings on Biofuels Bill

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Extend Senate Hearings on Biofuels Bill, say Groups Concerned with Role of Biofuels in Global Food Crisis

Ottawa? Today, farm leaders and international development groups raised a alarm bell over biofuels at hearings of the Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources on Bill C-33.

The government is expecting the Senate to adopt Bill C-33 before the summer. Bill C-33 would amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, enabling the government to establish a mandatory 5% biofuelsing as for transportation via regulation. Consequently, Senators are expediting hearings on this bill and are returning to the Senate tomorrow to vote on Bill C-33, despite reports that link biofuels to the growing global food crisis. The House of Commons delayed adoption of Bill C-33 in part because of the international controversy. As a result of these expedited Senate hearings, many groups have not yet had a chance to appear before the Senate, including Greenpeace and other environmental groups.

The global food crisis is directly linked to the production of biofuels and it is critical that the Senate examine this connection more fully before any decision on Bill C-33 is taken, said Pat Mooney, Executive Director of ETC Group, one of the witnesses at this morning's hearings. Mooney, who recently returned from the UN High-Level Conference on World Food Security, said, "The Senate now has a weighty responsibility with tremendous global implications, as governments around the world are being forced to reevaluate their commitments to biofuel targets."

The Conservative Government is promoting biofuels and Bill C-33 as a positive step to secure markets and high grain prices for Canadian farmers who face a serious income crisis, but Colleen Ross, Women's President of the National Farmers Union told Senator today that, "The window for farmers to make money from biofuels is small and will close fast. As usual, farmers will be paying higher prices for farm inputs and the real cost of production will eat into our profits."

Why should the Senate rush to adopt Bill C-33 to promote biofuels while the rest of the world is having second thoughts about imposing specific targets in gas for cars?" asked Eric Darier, Agriculture Campaigner for Greenpeace Canada.

The Oxfam International report published today, "Another Inconvenient Truth," shows why a blanket mandate for biofuels content in Canadian gasoline would help drive food prices higher worldwide, pushing millions of people further into poverty, said Mark Fried, Public Policy Coordinator for Oxfam Canada. "Burning food in our cars while people go hungry is not good public policy."

Additionally, a highly critical report from the UK, to be released next Monday, is expected to trigger reevaluation of the British government's targets for biofuels.