

**The Sustainable Energy Forum**



P O Box 11 152, Wellington

Email: [convenor@sef.org.nz](mailto:convenor@sef.org.nz)

Web: <http://www.sef.org.nz>

Contact for this Submission - John Blakeley 09 585 1192

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Email to: [Peter.Hoare@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Peter.Hoare@parliament.govt.nz)

Local Government and Environment Committee  
Secretariat  
Room 9.10  
Bowen House  
Parliament Buildings  
WELLINGTON

**SUBMISSION ON THE BIOFUEL BILL**

This submission has been prepared by John Blakeley, an Executive Committee member, and Steve Goldthorpe, a member, on behalf of the Sustainable Energy Forum (SEF).

We would like to appear before the Committee in person to present this submission if the Committee intends to hold a sitting in Auckland. Otherwise we will ask Tim Jones, Convenor of SEF (who is Wellington-based) to appear before the Committee to present this submission.

The objective of SEF is to "facilitate the use of energy for economic, environmental and social sustainability". SEF is a group of individuals and companies interested in promoting information and supporting action which will help move New Zealand towards a sustainable energy future. SEF has a membership of around 170 ranging from staff in major energy companies to students and retired people. Many of its members are active in small-scale sustainable energy supply and energy efficiency businesses. See <http://www.sef.org.nz> for further information.

We wish to make one specific comment and one general comment as follows.

**SPECIFIC COMMENT ON CLAUSE 34G(2) (e) OF THE BILL**

Under Clause 34G (Definition of a qualifying biofuel)-

1. Sub-clause (2) says that "An Order in Council may prescribe that biofuels of the following types or classes are or are not qualifying biofuels."
2. Item (e) is "biofuels meeting specified environmental or sustainability standards or specifications (for example specifications providing that qualifying fuels must be produced from biomass grown without causing undue environmental harm and without unduly impinging on food production):"

The concern of SEF is that in the Bill at present, there is no indication or guidance as to what criteria may be applied before an Order in Council is issued under sub-clause 2(e) above. Therefore the legislation as drafted is open to the sustainability objective being frustrated.

### **Background to our Concern:**

The explanatory note to the Bill on page 11 says "The use of renewable energy sources, such as biofuels, contributes to a sustainable energy system for New Zealand."

But in regard to the use of biofuels to meet the Biofuels Sales Obligation, from a study of the Bill SEF has concluded that at present it does not compel the use of biofuels which are sustainable, or indeed reduce greenhouse gas emissions when the production and manufacturing process of the biofuel is taken into account.

Our concern therefore is that as a consequence of this dependence on an unspecific Order in Council, a situation may eventuate allowing oil companies to buy or import, and then blend and sell biofuels that have not complied with any sustainability or greenhouse gas emission standard.

SEF believes that it is crucial that the New Zealand Government implements effective policies to encourage the production and use of biofuels for environmental reasons as well as economic and security of supply benefits.

The United Kingdom Government and the European Union have responded to strong lobbying by putting in place an obligation that biofuels must have a certificate of their ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and their sustainability.

### **Recommendation:**

In order for the Biofuel Bill to have its stated intention of contributing to a sustainable energy system for New Zealand, SEF believes that it is essential that either the Bill be amended, or an Order in Council be issued, so that biofuels that do not meet the requirements of a certificate confirming their sustainability are not qualifying biofuels for the Biofuels Sales Obligation.

### **GENERAL COMMENT**

In his separate submission on the Biofuels Bill, Dr Peter Read, a member of SEF, proposes a risk management strategy to address the risk of climate change approaching a tipping point. This involves the growing and harvesting of biofuels as part of a biotic carbon stock management strategy which makes use of the natural carbon cycle to remove carbon from the atmosphere and stock it somewhere safer. SEF supports the Government's announcement of two professorships at Massey University in the use of biochar, which forms part of Dr Read's proposed strategy, and we encourage the Government to broaden the scope of this research so that the other elements of Dr Read's strategy can be investigated and piloted.

On behalf of The Sustainable Energy Forum

**J. P. Blakeley**