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Rapid emissions cuts will negate need for BECCS, says IPCC

Fern welcomes apparent shift from relying on dangerous, unproven technological solutions to solve climate crisis

Brussels, 8 October, 01.00 GMT – The IPCC Special Report on 1.5 degrees has confirmed that Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) is not needed to limit warming to 1.5 degrees, provided that global emissions decline “well before 2030.” Given the [multiple negative impacts of BECCS](#) and other large-scale land-based mitigation approaches, Fern welcomes this finding. Fern also welcomes the IPCC report’s recognition of the importance of Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge in tackling climate change.

"By showing that we can hit the 1.5-degree goal through rapid emissions cuts, the IPCC creates an opening for real climate solutions. This should signal the end of the wishful thinking that has seen unproven and dangerous technological proposals, such as BECCS, dominate suggested climate solutions" said Kelsey Perlman, climate campaigner at forest and rights group Fern.

The IPCC report - which presents four ‘pathways’ to 1.5 degrees - shows that significant near-term emissions reductions could limit the amount of carbon removal to a few hundred Gigatons (Gt) and that this would be achievable through natural solutions alone.

These findings are echoed in a forthcoming report by the [Climate, Land, Ambition & Rights Alliance](#) (CLARA), which Fern is a member of.¹ The CLARA report shows that low-risk solutions such as ecosystems restoration, particularly by upholding land rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, could remove almost 10 Gt of carbon dioxide per year by 2050, removing a total of 448 Gt by 2100.

CLARA's findings, however, show that the IPCC's focus on 'afforestation' is too narrow, and a broader range of natural climate solutions could provide the 'missing pathway' to the 1.5 degrees goal. Fern encourages policy makers to develop holistic approaches to carbon dioxide removal that tackle three intersecting crises at once – climate change, biodiversity loss, and violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

“In light of the IPCC report, the EU and Member States now have two clear tasks: increase 2030 carbon-cutting ambition and massively increase the restoration of EU ecosystems. This will ensure that climate action improves Europeans’ health and wellbeing and benefits the countless species on the edge of extinction, all at a lower cost to the economy” says Kelsey Perlman, forest and climate campaigner at forest and rights group Fern.

¹ A copy of this report can be received upon request. Embargoed until 15th October 2018.



The IPCC report also has significant recommendations about the use of bioenergy as a renewable energy. The authors warn that large scale bioenergy demand could increase emissions due to increases in fertiliser use and have “significant impacts” on agricultural and food systems, raising “food security concerns”. The most ambitious of the four modelled pathways foresees a reduction in bioenergy (-11 per cent by 2030 and -16 per cent by 2050, compared to 2010).

“It is encouraging to see scenarios which are serious about the need to reduce bioenergy demand. The EU should use them to guide their soon-to-be-updated 2050 long-term climate strategy” says Katja Garson, Fern’s bioenergy campaigner.

The timing of this report is crucial as the European Commission will publish its 2050 long-term climate strategy in November 2018. This strategy will offer a vision of how each sector of the EU economy can be compatible with the aim to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. Fern believes that particular attention should be given to ensuring that efforts to remove carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere focus on restoring damaged ecosystems.

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Fern is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) created in 1995 to make the EU work for forests and people. Our work centres on forests and forest peoples’ rights and the issues that affect them such as EU consumption, trade, investment and climate change. All of our work is done in close collaboration with social and environmental organisations and movements across the world.