



[Login](#) | [Register](#) | [Shopping Cart](#)

[Home](#) » [Online Features](#) » [e2 - Eye on Earth](#)

Biofuels in Africa May Help Achieve Global Goals, Experts Say

by Alana Herro on August 10, 2007

Africa can use the biofuels boom to achieve the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and fight poverty, said participants at Africa's first high-level biofuels seminar in Ethiopia last month, the [African Press](#)

[Agency](#) reported. The

[MDGs](#) are a set of eight

goals—ranging from

stopping the spread of HIV/

AIDS to providing universal primary education—agreed upon by UN

member countries to meet the needs of the world's poorest people by 2015.

- [Home](#)
- [About Worldwatch](#)
- [- Mission](#)
- [- Staff](#)
- [- Jobs](#)
- [- Board of Directors](#)
- [- Annual Report](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Programs](#)
- [Online Features](#)
- [Press Room](#)
- [Global Partners](#)
- [Join Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

“Promotion of bio-fuels industry in developing countries has the capacity to propel such countries to achieve the MDGs through poverty reduction (especially job creation and economic enhancement), health impact and climate change,” experts at the three-day forum held at the [African Union](#) Conference Hall in Addis Ababa concluded.

A report from Ghana's [Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and](#)

[Technology](#), presented at the conference, indicated that Africa's biofuels potential is significantly higher than that of Europe or North America. The fuels, derived from biomass materials such as agricultural crops and plant oils, can improve farmers' incomes, decrease dependence on foreign energy sources, and increase energy security, the experts noted. “There is a growing



Africa has vast resources for developing biofuels from sugar cane and other crops.

Photo by Steve McNicholas

Join the Institute
Donate Now!



Poll

Would you eat fish farmed from a deserted coal mine?:

Yes. If sustainably managed and tested for safety, it could be an efficient way to farm fish.

No. I'm not convinced the fish would be free of chemicals left over from the mining process.

realization in Africa that high dependency on imported fossil fuels is having a negative impact on the continent's economic development," they said.

"It is true that Africa should be one of the primary locations for developing biofuels given its abundant natural-resource base," says Worldwatch Institute biofuels expert Raya Widenoja. But while applauding the optimism of the conference, she notes that, "unfortunately, there are also very large barriers to investment in most African countries, ranging from corruption to infrastructure and security challenges that are hindering realization of this vision."

Other Worldwatch Articles You Might Enjoy

- [Biofuels: Miracle Cure or Path to Greater Destruction?](#)
- [Eye on Mali: Jatropha Oil Lights Up Villages](#)
- [Europe's Use of Biofuels Nearly Doubles](#)

According to the recent Worldwatch report [Biofuels for](#)

[Transportation](#), 38 of the world's 47 poorest countries are net oil importers—the majority of them in Africa. At the Addis Ababa conference, experts from Kwame Nkrumah University noted that most oil-importing African countries can avoid high oil expenditures by developing their biofuels resources. But the abundance of Africa's other energy resources should not be ignored, says Worldwatch senior researcher [Janet Sawin](#). "Beyond the handful of oil-producing countries, Africa is rarely seen as having a wealth of energy resources. But the continent has enormous potential with renewable energy sources like biomass, solar, wind, and geothermal."

Participants at "Sustainable Biofuels Development in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges" included some 250 representatives from African Union member states, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and the scientific community. The conference was co-organized by the African Union Commission, the Government of [Brazil](#), and the [United Nations Industrial Development Organization](#) (UNIDO).

This story was produced by [Eye on Earth](#), a joint project of the [Worldwatch Institute](#) and the [blue moon fund](#). View the [complete archive](#) of Eye on Earth stories, or contact Staff Writer Alana Herro at [aherro \[AT\] worldwatch \[DOT\] org](mailto:aherro@worldwatch.org) with your questions, comments, and story ideas.

[contact us](#) | [sign up for e-mail updates](#) | [join us](#) | [sitemap](#) | [privacy policy](#) | [terms of use](#)

