

Warning Issued Over Invasive Biofuel Crops

By [Global Research](#)

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The Standing Committee of the Bern Convention (the Council of Europe Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats), has adopted a new recommendation for biofuels.

The recommendation, which is legally binding to member states, states that biofuel crops of species which are already recognised as invasive in the proposed planting region should be avoided.

This has come after the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) – an agency led by the Italian Ministry for the Environment – submitted a report to the Bern Convention which warned that some biofuels crops invade disturbed areas outside cultivated fields and in doing so can impact on native biodiversity.

In response to this report, the Bern Convention published Recommendation 141, 2009 in November 2009.

The recommendation says that as it is aware that some rural development plans contemplate the use of species which are already invasive in different regions of Europe, the Bern Convention recommends that observer states should:

- Screen new species and genotypes to be used as biofuel crops for invasiveness, carrying out the necessary risk assessments, including risk analysis of cross-pollination with wild relatives and habitat vulnerability;
- Monitor for possible spread of biofuel crops into natural habitats and their effects on species and habitats protected under the Convention;
- Wherever the species used as biofuel crop is proved to escape cultivation and have an effect on the natural environment, introduce appropriate mitigation measures to minimise its spread and impact on native biological diversity.

In the ISPRA report that prompted these measures, the agency drew attention to the fact that sustainable development and environmental benefits can only be jointly achieved when biofuel crops are farmed in an environmentally sustainable manner.

According to ISPRA, it is important to bring in pre-cultivation screening for each proposed genotype and region and in addition, new cultivation criteria to limit the dispersal and recruitment capacity of the invasive crops need to be introduced. The report claimed that without these measures, escaped biofuel crops may cause loss of native biodiversity and farmland functionality.

It also said that in the long-term, biofuel crops with invasive traits need to be limited in number and extent, even if it affects finances.

These points have been adopted in the Bern Convention's recommendation and the Convention claims that complying with them will conserve Europe 's wild flora and fauna (plants and wildlife) and their natural habitats, while producing sustainable energy allowing European states to reach renewable policy targets.

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For the promotion of sustainable energy in Europe

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For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca