

This response was submitted to the consultation held by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on *New approaches to biofuels* between December 2009 and March 2010. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

Simon Gould

QUESTIONS ANSWERED:

Question 1

ANSWER:

To decide whether greater use of biofuels is ethical we need to decide whether the uses to which we put biofuels are ethical. For example I consider the car itself to be unethical for many reasons one of which is that while powered by petrol, cars are a selfish use of a finite global resource, which not only squanders those finite resources but does so at a speed that contributes to global warming. There are now over a billion cars on the planet, a figure that's expected to rise to 2 billion by 2025. Additionally I remember watching a film once from South America in which a tribe there said that to extract oil from under the earth is very bad for the planet as a working organism. Whether that's true I don't know but the cautionary approach seems best to me. So are biofuels relatively more ethical than petrol? In the sense that first generation biofuels do not involve sucking the planet's lifeblood then yes and if the global warming effect is the same as petrol then the fact that to acquire it doesn't involve sucking the planet's lifeblood then yes it is again more ethical than petrol. Again the fact that each country can grow its own biofuels should mean that countries don't have to fight for what is termed fuel security, which in practice has meant oil companies behaving badly around the world to get petrol from under local populations, not to mention the devastating effect of oil spills on nature. And of course countries have gone to war over oil, as is the commonly held opinion with Iraq. However the fact that crops grown for food are now competing with demand for the same crops for biofuels raises the spectre of food price wars. Clearly it is unethical to feed human food to inanimate objects. If aliens did pay a visit to Earth I'm sure they'd blink (if they had eyelids) to see all our food being shovelled into cars. There have been food riots over the increasing scarcity of food in 60 countries, so the spectre of food wars between countries becomes a possibility. So first generation biofuels are no more ethical than petrol. However in my limited understanding second generation biofuels such as algae on the sea or biofuels from domestic waste sound ethical. But the information changes so rapidly. Now I hear algae are not ethical after all.

Question 2

ANSWER:

Whether they can be developed without affecting the world food supply and whether they can be produced & supplied without high emissions of pollution, of the kind that cause global warming and others in general. Additionally whether they can be produced without the use of animal parts and without animal suffering. Another example of an ethical challenge is scams such as the European Commission defining Palm Oil plantations as Forests in order to ignore the destruction of real forest to plant palm crops

Question 3

ANSWER:

I feel it's impossible to be well informed as there is so much information out there. However I do receive the Biofuelwatch news updates which gives me the potential to be well informed, although I don't read all of them.

Question 4

ANSWER:

I don't know

Question 5

ANSWER:

domestic waste diverted from landfill

Question 6**ANSWER:**

Energy security is a concept which makes the world more insecure in the first place. However i guess its true that the more municipal waste is turned into energy the less reliant countries will be on imported energy.

Question 9**ANSWER:**

The recent news that Monsanto GM corn is showing signs of causing liver damage in tests confirms me in my view that GM is not ethical and neither is animal testing.

Question 10**ANSWER:**

Well i don't know enough on these issues but i definitely know i don't think companies should be able to patent seed from plant.