

ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF BIOFUEL EXPANSION IN KENYA

Biofuels, promoted as a renewable solution to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change, can reduce emissions by up to 41% compared to fossil fuels (Jeswani et al., 2020). However, their production raises significant ethical concerns, particularly in Kenya, where land use conflicts, food security threats, and social inequities challenge sustainability goals. This paper examines Kenya's biofuel policies, anchored in the Energy Act of 2006 and an unfinalized 2011 draft National Biofuel Policy, which prioritize economic gains such as job creation but lack robust environmental and social protections (Nature Kenya, 2024). Key ethical issues include the conversion of natural habitats into croplands, undermining biodiversity and violating small farmers' land rights as foreign investors gain precedence, and the diversion of agricultural land for biofuel feedstocks, exacerbating food shortages, price increases, and future water scarcity. Foreign entities often disproportionately benefit, while anthropocentric policy biases neglect ecosystem health, as seen in land use changes contributing to erosion and soil salinity. Despite economic potential, policy gaps—such as inadequate land use regulations—fail to address biodiversity loss and social displacement, highlighting the absence of a robust ethical framework. This analysis underscores the critical need to reconcile energy ambitions with equitable and sustainable outcomes in Kenya's biofuel expansion.

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Track Classification: Renewable Energy: The future of biofuels