



# Press Release

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## **“Not the right time to call for more idle agricultural land”**

Brussels, Today – ePURE, the voice of the European renewable ethanol industry, fears that today’s proposed reform of the Common Agricultural Policy will result in inconsistent policy.

ePURE is deeply concerned about the European Commission’s plans to set-aside 7% of EU agricultural land as “ecological focus areas”, in effect marking the reintroduction of the EU’s set-aside policy. Initially intended to curb agricultural surpluses, mandatory set-aside has been abolished in 2009 against the backdrop of soaring soft commodity prices. In the light of a global food crisis in 2008, the EU could no longer afford to keep arable land out of production. Given the continuously growing world population concerns about food security in the world are now back on the political agenda.

This new set-aside proposal comes in addition to the continuous land idling in Europe, which already leads to a substantial loss of agricultural land in the EU. In parallel the Commission reflects on possible policy measures to hedge against potential indirect land use change (ILUC) effects of biofuels production. As the ILUC debate boils down to the availability of enough arable land to fulfill our needs now and in the future, the proposal shows a clear lack of consistency between the different EU policies.

“There is no holistic view on the matter”, Rob Vierhout, Secretary-General of ePURE commented. “ILUC and set-aside are mutually exclusive. As long as Europe has the luxury to sacrifice valuable productive hectares worries about food shortages and thereof resulting risks of harmful land use changes are without substance.”

The solution to both the ILUC debate and the quest for an environmentally more sustainable agriculture lies in the enlargement of the scope of binding sustainability criteria. “The Commission has a golden opportunity to really make a difference. Eco-set-aside will not do the trick”, Vierhout concluded.

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