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Food and Biofuel: A Possible Dialogue? An Overview about Brazilian Ethanol Context

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Abstract

Since the concern with Kyoto Protocol targets, the energy matrix and the strategies for sustainable economic development have been the centre of discussions of experts and global authorities. This new scenario has led ethanol into agendas and policies, especially in developed countries, like the United States (U.S.) and members of the European Union (EU). The ethanol importation is one of the strategies to achieve this goal and Brazil has a representative role in this scenario. However, the Brazilian ethanol exportation is decreasing in Europe. There are allegations about social and environmental dumping because of historical conditions of precarious work in the sugar cane fields and about the no adoption of conservation practices in production. Another important issue that also appears is the competition between food and biofuels, since Brazil has a strategic role in food production. Some Brazilian policies were published to avoid it, as The Sugarcane Zoning, where the orientations concern the use of mechanised crop, for instance, without the labour degradation found in burnt harvested sugarcane fields. Nevertheless, there are no policies or tools that consider the sustainability evaluation, with the social, economic, environmental and institutional dimensions in an integrated model.

Keywords: Biofuels, Kyoto protocol