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Biofuels in Eastern Africa: dangers yes, but much potential as well

Biofuel production is booming. Worldwide, production of ethanol for fuel has almost quintupled since 2000, while that of biodiesel has risen by almost 25 times. This is, in part, a response to policies to replace fossil fuels for transport with renewable fuels – in practice, biofuels. Subsidies and tax breaks have also been offered to producers of biofuels.

To understand more about the balance between opportunity and threat represented by biofuels, four countries in Eastern Africa – Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania – were chosen for specific study by ODI in partnership with local researchers. Three questions were addressed:

- What has been the recent development of biofuel production? What is known about major investments announced with great publicity?
- What is the potential to produce feedstock? How much for domestic use, how much export, and hence what trade possibilities exist?
- What policies to foster and regulate the industry are in place? How well advanced are schemes to certify production for sustainability?

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