

UK government report suggests using waste instead of wheat to make biofuels

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(Tech Xplore)—The Royal Academy of Engineering, a U.K. governmental entity has released a lengthy document called "[Sustainability of liquid biofuels](#)" outlining the current state of biofuel manufacture and use in the U.K. The group suggests that more of the fuel should be made using waste and less from regular food crops such as wheat.

Unlike the U.S. and some other countries that make [biofuel](#) mainly out of corn or sugarcane, the U.K. relies heavily on [wheat](#) and used [cooking oil](#). But the authors of the report say using land changes as a means to grow more of the crops used to produce the fuel will likely release more emissions than continued use of gas or [diesel fuel](#). To gain the greatest benefit, they conclude, the government will need to impose restrictions on crops grown to make it.

The authors of the report note that last year, nearly half of the land in the U.K. that was used to grow biofuels was dedicated to growing wheat. The current trend to make land more amenable to growing wheat for biofuel is not the most effective means of reaching that goal, they contend.

Instead, they suggest that more effort be put into collecting and using what they call green wastes, such as straw that is never used, sawmill residue or even the dregs from facilities making whiskey. There is also an opportunity to collect waste from unusual sources, such as from what have been nicknamed "fatbergs," which are floating piles of fatty material found in sewers. There is also a possibility of growing plants that are not now considered to be very useful, but which can be grown without land modification—willow and Miscanthus, for example, or elephant grass—all could be grown to produce biofuels in places food plants find inhospitable.

The report also notes that despite all the press lately about the spread of electric vehicles, their research suggests that there will still be high demand for liquid fuel in the coming years for the transportation sector (mostly airplanes) and for heavy vehicles such as those used in mining, farming or construction.

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