

EDITORIAL

Sentiment – also from our side – towards the biofuel boom and agricultural trade distortions is greatly amplified, as the food shortage dominates international discussion. This was highlighted by the United Nations Secretary-General at the High-Level Conference on World Food Security, who said that if we are to avoid risk of political and humanitarian crises, food production must increase by 50 percent by the year 2030.

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Adopting climate change-related legislation still has some thorny ambiguities. This is exemplified by recent events in the US where the Senate failed to garner a 3/5 majority to push through a cap and trade bill, while erroneously declaring the polar bear a threatened species in a separate act. We must ask from where the US Secretary of Interior receives his wisdom when expressing that it would be “wholly inappropriate” to use the listing as a tool to enact global warming policies? Concurrently, oil and gas exploration will proceed in the areas where the bears live.

In conjunction with reducing CO₂ emissions while meeting future energy demand, there is a growing debate concerning the role of nuclear power. The International Atomic Energy Agency says the number of power reactors around the world is estimated to increase 60 percent by 2030.

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The fight over the sale of whale meat continues in Japan. Two activists were recently imprisoned for taking a package of whale meat from a firm, whom they allege is commercially trading the product smuggled in under the auspices of a State sponsored scientific whaling programme. The authorities seem to turn a blind eye to this.

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We are sorry to hear that Leen Hordijk is coming to the end of one of the most successful terms of any Director in the history of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis. He will now become Director of the Institute for Environment and Sustainability in Ispra (Italy). Detlof von Winterfeldt has been chosen as IIASA's 9th Director and will assume the position in 2009.

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The Spokesperson of the United Nations Secretary-General has confirmed that Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, Nicholas Michel intends to leave his position when his current contract expires. We are very interested to know who will succeed him in this pivotal position.

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Of particular interest, is the European Union proposal for an implementing agreement under the Law of the Sea Convention for the governance of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (see page 182). This would be a very positive step.

7 July 2008

- Wolfgang R. Steyer -