

29-11-19 Q:- The government's recent decision to allow production of ethanol by reconverting sugar has various types of outcomes to the sugar and ethanol production. Examine ~~growth~~

The recent debatable in biofuel policy is the permission granted to ethanol manufacturers, mostly sugar mills that produce it from their byproduct molasses - to convert sugarcane juice directly into alcohol and also use surplus sugar and foodgrains, such as wheat, rice and corn, for this purpose.

The government has chosen to incentivise the use of these questionable raw materials by fixing relatively higher prices for the ethanol produced from them.

Decision → Various outcomes for ethanol production

1. Open doors for the sugar factories to buy sugarcane and for the farmers to grow it.

1.1 Just for ethanol rather than sugar production.

2. Sugarcane, wheat, millet etc are water guzzlers, besides input-intensive crops, their use for biofuel production is virtually an invitation to ecological disaster.

2.1 The social cost of such water is higher than the economic cost gains from ethanol displacing petrol.



3. India like land stressed countries → where land is hard to find → can ill-afford to use it exclusively for growing biofuel crops.

3.1 For example, Brazil → where forest is clearing to grow biofuel crops.

4. In concern to food grains, the present decision may give the impression that surplus states can safely converted to biofuel production.

4.1 It given the rampant malnutrition and hidden hunger in the country.

5. Studies revealed that this disorted the cropping patterns and spiked food prices in the countries.

Another fact is that India has substantial potential to produce ethanol and other types of biofuels from non-sugarcane and non food sources. The National policy on Biofuel 2018 lists urban and rural garbage, cellulosic and lingo-cellulosic, etc and Crop residue like wheat and rice straw etc for ethanol production.

Thus Second generation (2G) ethanol is costlier than molasses based ethanol → it recompensates the ecological system from pollutions. oil companies have reacted favourable to it.

Such technologies hold the key to supplies of environmental friendly biofuel without any effect on food security or ecology.