



## Seawater solution to biofuel dilemma

*From Mr Karl A. Ziegler.*

Sir, Your editorial "Biofuel befuddled" (June 11) correctly challenges the concern of Abdalla El-Badri, secretary-general of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, in your front page report ("Drive on biofuels risks oil price surge", June 6).

His suggestion that the further development of corn, sugar and other types of biofuels dependent on fresh water agriculture might result in Opec nations slowing their future investment plans, to maintain high prices for their oil and gas, is focused on the wrong issues.

A dramatically different technology has been developed, using the virtually infinite supply of seawater to produce biofuels in coastal desert areas. This technology is not competing with normal corn and wheat agriculture for water and land.

This seawater-fed technology could be introduced in up to 50 sites worldwide, which have the most arid 40,000 km of desert sea-coasts. Many such coastlines occur in both wealthy freshwater-starved oil-producing countries and in some of the world's poorest nations.

Niels de Terra (Letters, June 9) highlights the work of the Seawater Foundation in Mexico. I have followed the revolutionary work of the Seawater Foundation over recent decades, from

Arizona to the Middle East and Africa, to its present programme in Sonora, Mexico, which could develop up to 500,000 hectares of seawater-fed agriculture and aquaculture, producing the most environmentally friendly and low-cost biofuels to date.

Expansion of the concept of greening the world's deserts with seawater in substantial quantities worldwide could have potentially dramatic benefits. Greenhouse gases can be reduced, while slowing the rise in global temperature. The rise in sea levels, induced by snow and glacial melt and thermal expansion, can be lessened. Thousands of new jobs, in currently unproductive areas, could be created, reducing migration pressures. Prawns and fish can be profitably nurtured, with any discharge used to fertilise salt-tolerant seedcrops on nearby pastures. The oil from the seeds can be used to produce new biofuels for automobiles and aircraft.

All of the above benefits would have a positive impact on some of the world's most pressing environmental problems.

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