

Union of Concerned Scientists Clean Fuel Standard Principles

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The Union of Concerned Scientists has for many years supported the implementation of performance standards requiring pollution reductions from vehicles of all types, transportation fuels and the power sector. The following principles guide our work on performance standards for transportation fuel, known as Clean Fuel Standards, at the state and federal level.

1. A Clean Fuel Standard should hold the oil industry accountable to support the decarbonization of transportation fuels consistent with keeping global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees C, focusing on rapidly phasing out petroleum and transitioning to renewable electricity as a primary source of energy for surface transportation with other low carbon fuels to minimize climate and tailpipe pollution during the transition and in sectors where direct electrification is more challenging, such as long-haul aviation.
2. A Clean Fuel Standard should evaluate all transportation fuels on the basis of their full lifecycle emissions, based on the best available science, with the cleanest fuels supported in proportion to their benefits and more polluting fuels held accountable to cover the cost of supporting the cleanest fuels.
3. A Clean Fuel Standard must include provisions to assess and address disproportionate impacts, developed with meaningful engagement from affected stakeholders. Specifically, a CFS should not contribute to the creation of “hot spots” of pollution throughout the fuel lifecycle and must include cost containment provisions or mitigation measures to protect low-income consumers from bearing a disproportionate cost burden for transportation decarbonization.
4. A Clean Fuel Standard should manage the levels of consumption of all feedstocks based on availability to avoid negative impacts including but not limited to disruptions in energy or food markets, deforestation and ecosystem loss from an expanding footprint of agriculture.
5. A Clean Fuel Standard should complement and support soil health and sustainable farming, protect sensitive ecosystems, avoid water pollution and distortionary subsidies for large farms or confined animal feeding operations, and otherwise ensure sustainability.
6. Support for transportation electrification should be equitably structured to ensure all communities are represented in program design and oversight and benefit with specific measures to reduce air pollution and increase access to mobility and economic opportunity for disadvantaged and overburdened communities.
7. A Clean Fuel Standard should reinforce and complement other policies to reduce pollution, accelerate transportation electrification, improve transportation equity and should not undermine, preempt or substitute for other policies that cut transportation or stationary pollution.