

East Asia Science & Security Network Report, April 25, 2007

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1. Preparing for Global Oil Peak

The US Government's General Accounting Office released a report to Congress that said that the uncertainty about future oil supply makes it important for the US to develop a strategy for addressing a peak and decline in oil production. The report warns that an imminent peak and sharp decline could lead to a worldwide recession, but if the peak is delayed, alternative technologies would have a greater potential to mitigate the consequences.

[Crude Oil](#)

2. Ethical Investment of Oil Wealth

Henrik Syse, head of corporate governance at Norges Bank Investment Management (NBIM) and senior researcher at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), at a meeting sponsored by the Environmental Change and Security Program of the Woodrow Wilson Center on March 5, 2007, discussed Norway's Petroleum Fund, which is currently valued at \$300 billion. The world's third largest oil exporter, Norway created the fund to reinvest a portion of its oil wealth for the sake of future generations, and to avoid the "resource trap."

[Ethical Investment of Oil Wealth](#)

3. Nuclear Export Controls

In an opinion piece in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists ("The Nuclear Flock," March/April 2007), Michael Krepon of the Henry L. Stimson Center argues that the US decision to give India an exemption to nuclear export controls will encourage other countries to pursue proliferation. Noting

that there is no precedent for single-country exemptions, Krepon argues that the idea that the deal will remain limited to India "smacks of wishful thinking."

[The Nuclear Flock](#)

4. Dilemma of Biofuel Production

The Congressional Research Service released a report for Congress entitled, "Ethanol and Biofuels: Agriculture, Infrastructure, and Market Constraints Related to Expanded Production." The report notes that meeting some of the more ambitious projections for biofuel demand would require more than the total current U.S. corn crop, and switching to alternative crops risks moving much agriculture land away from food production.

[Ethanol and Biofuels](#)

[EPA Fact Sheet on Biodiesel](#)

The Associated Press (Paul Elias, "Biotech seeks to ease reliance on corn," 4/14/07) reported that, with the demand for ethanol driving up food prices and reducing corn supplies, genetic engineers are looking for new microbes capable of producing alternative fuels from sources other than corn.

[Biotech seeks to ease reliance on corn](#)

5. Petroleum Alternatives for Industrial Use

The Seattle Times (Kristi Heim, "Researchers study how to replace petroleum with plant-derived sugar," 4/20/07) reported that in addition to biofuels, scientists at Washington State University and the US Department of Energy are studying how to replace other petroleum products with plant-derived sugars. They hope that chemical products sold at higher margins can help offset the cost of making lower-margin alternative fuels, creating more incentive for producers.

[Replacing_Petroleum_with_plant_sugars](#)

6. Bird Flu

The World Health Organization notes that this May marks the 10th anniversary of the beginning of the global fight to prevent a bird flu pandemic. Since that time, \$1.9 billion has been spent fighting influenza, and there is now far greater awareness about the risks of a global pandemic. However much remains unknown.

[Ten Years of Fighting Bird Flu](#)

7. Solar Weather Forecasting

NASA spacecraft have made the first 3-dimensional photographs of the sun. The new view will greatly aid scientists' ability to understand solar physics and thereby improve space weather forecasting, thus increasing the reliability of power grids, satellites, and radio communication.

[NASA Spacecraft make first 3-D pictures of sun](#)

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