

AEBIOM and EURELECTRIC call for EU wide binding sustainability criteria for biomass now!

13/03/2013

Bioenergy, and in particular solid woody biomass, will play a crucial role in meeting the EU's 2020 renewable energy targets and mitigating climate change. This renewable energy source can provide reliable and base-load supply to meet EU energy needs. In order to realise the potential of biomass, AEBIOM^[1] and EURELECTRIC^[2] strongly advocate establishing harmonised, binding sustainability criteria for solid biomass on the EU level. EU utilities have already taken the lead in voluntary measures by collectively developing sustainability requirements for pelletised biomass and sourcing wood from certified forests (such as PEFC or FSC). The voluntary approaches should be substantiated and finalised by a legal framework at the EU level. Biomass imports continue to increase and sustainability criteria are needed.

"Because bioenergy is a key technology in the EU renewables portfolio, delays in the introduction of EU criteria put the renewable energy target at risk," said Jean-Marc Jossart, Secretary General of AEBIOM. According to the National Renewable Energy Action Plans, more than half of the EU renewable energy target is expected to be met by various forms of bioenergy. Biomass use in heating and cooling is expected to increase by 47% and biomass use for electricity generation is projected to more than double between 2010 and 2020. Harmonised sustainability criteria will ensure that these expected increases continue to take place within a sustainable framework.

"EU harmonised, mandatory sustainability criteria will provide a stable investment climate for energy producers and biomass suppliers," said Hans ten Berge, Secretary General of EURELECTRIC. Over the last years, the absence of such harmonisation has led to varying national sustainability rules, undermining the goal of achieving an EU-wide internal energy market by 2014. This regulatory complexity hampers trade both within the EU and internationally and increases costs. *"The current uncertainty on the outcome and timetable of possible new EU measures on biomass sustainability is now delaying biomass investments,"* continued ten Berge. Immediate establishment of mandatory criteria will support the continuity of sustainable biomass deployment.

According to AEBIOM and EURELECTRIC the criteria, that are intended also to provide evidence to the society that biomass is sustainable, should be based on reliable science and focus on major environmental concerns. The implementation of the criteria should take into account existing national forest legislations and system inventories, as well as sustainable forest management certifications and practices. Only a balanced and non-bureaucratic proposal will allow mobilising and delivering to the market the sufficient volumes of biomass necessary to achieve EU energy and climate policies objectives.

^[1] The European Biomass Association is the common voice of the European bioenergy sector with the aim to develop the market for

sustainable bioenergy, and ensure favourable business conditions for its members. AEBIOM brings together 30 national associations and around 70 companies from all over Europe.

[2] The Union of the Electricity Industry–EURELECTRIC is the sector association representing the common interests of the electricity industry at pan-European level, plus its affiliates and associates on several other continents. EURELECTRIC seeks to contribute to the development and competitiveness of the electricity industry and to promote the role of electricity both in the advancement of society and in helping provide solutions to the challenges of sustainable development.

Note to Editors:

EURELECTRIC is the sector association representing the interests of the European electricity industry across the full value chain – generation, transmission (users' perspective), distribution and retail – at pan-European level. Its two-day Annual Conference takes place in a different European capital each year in June, drawing between 400 and 500 delegates from across Europe. This year's conference in Bologna will discuss “innovative investments - re-energising Europe”. To find out more about EURELECTRIC's structure and activities, please visit our website at www.eurelectric.org.