



European Biomass Association

www.aebiom.org

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Press release

Renewables directive will boost bioenergy industry

The European Parliament has today adopted the Renewable Energy Directive after the European Council has reached a final agreement on 11 December. The European Biomass Association congratulates the European Institutions for an excellent work and is certain that this piece of legislation will introduce many positive changes for renewables especially for heating and cooling sector.

AEBIOM is delighted to see that the 20% binding renewables target (binding national targets) and 10% renewables in transport target were kept and that these targets will be implemented via strong national Renewable Action Plans. AEBIOM regrets, however, that EP's proposal to introduce the mandatory aspect of interim national renewable energy targets as well as penalties for non-compliance of such targets was not accepted by the Council. This would have helped to ensure that the politicians commit themselves to these targets right from the beginning of the target achievement period.

AEBIOM strongly supports the EU institutions' decision to focus on national action plans (EC will publish the template by June 2009 and MS will submit the action plans by 30 June 2010) as these are the key instruments to reach the renewables target. Next year AEBIOM will focus on helping stakeholders and national authorities to establish the biomass part of the renewable action plans.

The directive brings major changes for heating and cooling sector by requiring MS to introduce measures in order to increase the use of renewable energy sources (RES) in the buildings sector. However, it is a pity that the Council disagreed to introduce the binding minimum requirements to be set by Member States for existing and new buildings. For example, biomass for heat in the form of pellets provides a convenient and cheap fuel compared to fossil fuels' options for households. At the same time, the heat (from biomass) is cheap for public spending per ton oil equivalent produced and per ton of CO₂ saved. AEBIOM is glad that the Directive also stresses the importance of developing central district heating and cooling systems using renewable energy sources.

Calculating final energy consumption rather than primary one when counting the RES target (which was not the case in the previous EU legislation on renewable) is a strong driving force for higher conversion efficiencies. Biomass converted to useful heat and cogeneration is definitely favored compared to bioelectricity production alone.

Fortunately national support schemes and the 20% renewables targets will not be affected by the review in 2014. Nevertheless, the directive keeps the review clause for biofuels sector that will focus on the minimum greenhouse gas emission saving, indirect land use changes, social impacts, biodiversity, availability of electricity or hydrogen from renewable sources etc. This might bring the insecurity for the biofuels investors.

The directive improves an access of renewables to the electricity grid and gas pipelines including bio-methane. Biogas can potentially cover roughly 1/3 of biomass resources by 2020.

The biofuels and sustainability criteria

AEBIOM is worried that specific technologies and resources will be counted double. The consumption of electricity in transport shall be considered to be 2,5 times the energy content



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of the renewable electricity input. The contribution made by biofuels produced from wastes, residues, non-food cellulosic/ligno-cellulosic material shall be considered to be twice that made by other biofuels. The support of these technologies is necessary though it might distort the market and lead to endless discussions on the counting procedures. There is a danger that biogas will be converted into electricity for transport rather than being directly used in vehicles. The question can be raised - which option is more efficient? The biogas plant that uses both: manure (which would count double) and energy crops (will not count double) will experience unnecessary complications with counting procedures. Wood used to produce transport biofuels would be artificially favoured compared to wood used for high efficiency heat production.

AEBIOM is glad to see that for the moment sustainability criteria remains applicable only to transport biofuels and bioliquids. As for the whole biomass, there is already cross-compliance rules for agriculture and different sustainable forest management schemes which ensure the sustainability for agricultural and forestry production. Additional criteria should be studied carefully first in order to avoid unnecessary burdens for biomass use. Unnecessarily strict sustainability criteria might lead to lower biomass use whilst fossil fuels do not have restrictions and would fill the gap of the unused biomass potential.

AEBIOM also supports that the final agreement indicates that the criteria should be applicable for both European and imported biofuels. However, AEBIOM thinks that it will be more difficult to monitor the sustainability of biofuels in third countries and, therefore, priority should be given to EU production of raw material for biofuels.

The peat is not considered as renewable energy but producing biomass on already drained peatland is hopefully possible.

As regards to CO₂ emissions reduction, the agreement indicates that the greenhouse gas savings from the use of biomass fuels in transport should be 35% until 2017 and 50% from 2017 (60% for the installations built after 2017). The threshold of 50-60% of biofuels might force the producers of European biofuels to blend it with the imported biofuels in order to reach the necessary CO₂ reduction. Parameters like by-products for feed industry (high CO₂ reduction can be reached in the EU as well by burning by-products, however, the animal feed industry would lose a high value feed for their animals) and security of energy supply should be considered.

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