The European Commission may attempt to bring forward post-2020 sustainability criteria for biomass after the EU’s new climate and energy policy framework is finalised.

But for the period before 2020, the Commission will only issue a policy paper on the subject, a member of energy commissioner Gunther Oettinger’s cabinet confirmed at biomass association AEBIOM’s annual conference on Monday.

The paper, to be issued in the coming weeks, will “give certainty there is no further action required” on biomass sustainability before 2020, said Jasmin Battista.

She added that post-2020 sustainability rules might be included in provisions on indirect land use change. This is likely to be a matter for the next Commission.

The Commission’s energy department attempted to bring forward sustainability criteria for biomass last year but the plan was abandoned due to strong opposition from other departments, as well countries with large forestry sectors and some industries.

In the policy paper that will be issued instead pre-2020 policy paper that existing rules, including the forest strategy currently being drafted, are sufficient.

In spite of ongoing concerns over its sustainability, biomass looks set to receive a policy boost from the Commission, which will outline a role for the sector in its policy paper on reducing EU energy dependence next month.

EU leaders asked the Commission to deliver the paper due to the tensions with its major gas supplier, Russia, over Ukraine.

The draft plan will mention the importance of biomass as a fuel for district heating and the role of heat pumps, Ms Battissta said, adding that the Commission considers the sector “part of our solution to the [energy] security problem”.
The Commission wants to promote “synergies” between the 2030 policies and energy security. This will be one of the key issues at the European Council in October where EU leaders are due to finalise climate and energy targets, Ms Battista said.

She also indicated that the governance structure for implementing the planned renewables target, which will no longer be broken down into binding national targets, is likely to be based on more prescriptive reporting rules for member states.

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Follow-up:

Aebiom conference (http://www.aebiom.org/conference/)

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