First woodchips delivered to Burgess BioPower plant

Commissioning has begun at the 75MW Burgess BioPower plant in Berlin, New Hampshire as it received its first delivery of woodchips in August.

The power plant cost $273 million (€205 million) to build. It is located on the site of the Burgess Pulp Mill and has been designed to consume 750,000 tonnes of wood biomass annually – around 100 truckloads of woodchips a day.

The biomass plant is equipped with both a biomass-fired bubbling fluidised-bed boiler and a new air quality control system. Public Service of New Hampshire has a 20-year power purchase agreement in place. Babcox and Wilcox Construction was the main contractor for the project and the milestone meant it was able to test one of the three new truck dumpers at one of the two onsite tipping stations in the fully automated wood yard as part of its commissioning process.

The plant is slated to open towards the end of this year when it will be operated under Delta Power Services’ six-year contract. Construction was originally scheduled to last for just over 25 months but this is likely to overrun to 27.

The number of workers onsite has dropped from over 500 during the construction phase to under 400 at the end of August.

European pellet suppliers give views on sustainability

With bioenergy expected to play a major role towards 2020 targets and beyond, pellet suppliers will contribute to guaranteeing this increase takes place in a framework respectful of the environment.

This is why the European Industrial Pellet Suppliers (EIPS) group is in favour of an EU legislation establishing harmonised sustainability criteria for solid biomass used in the electricity and heating sectors.

Pellet sustainability begins with establishing the origin of the raw material used by European pellet mills: sawmill processing residues (sawdust and woodchips), wood harvesting residues (branches, tops and crowns), and wood from thinnings and other low quality roundwood.

The origin of this supply logically sticks to the fact EU forests are managed under a multiproduct approach with wood energy materials being, to a large extent, a secondary product from the wood industry. It is not economically interesting for European forest owners to manage their forests for wood energy purposes only. Additionally, it is not economically feasible for European pellet plants to use quality roundwood.

When analysing the criteria needed to guarantee the sustainable origin of wood pellets, it should not be forgotten that European forests are submitted to strict national rules and legislations which ensure they are sustainably managed. Part of this forest area is also following the sustainable forest management principles established by PEFC/FSE voluntary certification.

Finally, the principle of ‘cascading use’ of the biomass resources has now entered into the bioenergy debate. This principle aims to favour the material use, re-use and recycling of wood fibres prior to being used for energy production.

The European Parliament has recently called for a legal instrument to establish this principle that would lead to a hierarchical, smart and efficient use of biomass and to value-adding applications. At first glance, this principle could look tempting to organise the use of the resource. However, with a closer view, it is obvious it cannot be disconnected from the economic context of the different uses to which the biomass resource may be put. In addition, setting this principle by law would go against the market economy.

It would be not appropriate for the EU to proscribe to any industry sector which raw material it can or cannot use in its process. Overall, making the cascading use principle legally binding would make no sense from a legal, economic and practical point of view.

In conclusion, European pellet suppliers are strongly involved in providing a sustainable biomass on the EU market today, and are eager to maintain this commitment in the future to accompany the developments of the bioenergy sector.

References:

EIPS represents the joint forces of the European pellet producers, traders and stakeholders involved in the pellet supply chain.

For more information: This article was written by Arnold Dale, VP of bioenergy at Ekman Group and chairman of the EIPS group. To find out more about EIPS contact Fanny-Pomme Langue, GM of the group, fanny.langue@aebiom.org