Wood pellets gain ground

Brussels (ae) Pellet production started in Europe and North America when the oil crises occurred in 1973 and 1979. Since then, wood pellets have become the future-proof heating alternative that is cost-effective, environmentally friendly and convenient. As a result, they are starting to gain ground, and are seriously taken into consideration by large energy players.

Wood pellets have many decisive advantages over other heating alternatives. The supply of natural gas and oil is subject to massive price variations and geopolitical risks. In contrast, the supply of wood from domestic forests is much more secure and can help to reduce heating costs by around fifty percent.

Due to these advantages, EU consumption has grown strongly in recent years. Worldwide, there are 760 pellet production plants with a total capacity of 42 million tonnes. Europe consumes around 70 percent of the pellets produced globally. There are three main market orientations: the power-oriented market, the heating-oriented market and the mix-oriented market.

Countries such as the UK and the Netherlands have clearly power-oriented markets, which are primarily based on imports. The main flow of pellets comes from the US and Canada. However, other countries, such as Russia, Brazil and Australia, are also growing as exporters. Countries including Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Finland and Norway have heating-oriented markets. Germany, Austria and France currently produce enough pellets to cover domestic consumption. This is not the case for Italy, which mainly relies on imported pellets. Sweden, Denmark, Belgium and Poland have a mix-oriented market, with consumption shared between the power and the heating markets.

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The wood pellets heating sector is growing rapidly at the EU level, with consumption increasing by one million tonnes every year since 2011. The heating market currently accounts for around eight million tonnes of the global consumption of 15 million tonnes consumed on the EU level. With this fast-growing market, there is a need to guarantee the quality of wood pellets. This is one of the reasons why ENplus certification, which was introduced in Germany in 2010, is proving very successful. Today, more than four million tonnes of pellets, representing around 50 percent of the EU heating market, are ENplus certified.

The European Pellet Council (EPC) and the European Industry of Pellet Suppliers (EIPS), both founded by the European Biomass Association (AEBIOM), published a chapter on pellets in the AEBIOM Statistical Report, 2013 European Bioenergy Outlook. The 2014 edition will be published at the end of October 2014. The fifth AEBIOM Bioenergy Conference will take place from 12 to 14 May 2014 in Brussels. The event will touch on hot topics such as member states with successful pellet market developments, how to ensure a sustainable pellet supply for the heating market, and the briquette, wood chip and wood log markets. ◄

For further information, please see www.aebiom.org/conference.

First-ever world SHP report and interactive global SHP map

Brussels (ms, la) ESHA, the European Small Hydropower Association, has collaborated with the China-based International Center on Small Hydro Power (ICSPHP), under the auspices of UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) and helped to provide statistical data, on the basis of which a report on the worldwide development status of small hydropower (SHP) has been published. The aim is to identify the status of SHP development across the globe, as well as its potential in different countries and regions.

ESHA made a significant contribution to the report, providing confirmation of the potential for the SHP sector in Europe by releasing statistics from its Hydro Data Initiative (HYDI) database, which runs under the RESTOR Hydro project and is co-funded by the European Commission’s Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) programme. The HYDI database provided the relevant energy, market and policy data for the SHP sector in 27 European countries, thus enabling the completion of the main World Small Hydropower Development Report 2013 (WSHPDR 2013). The report contains contributions by over 60 authors or organisations.

The aim of this report is to present a broad overview of the status of SHP as a contributor to global renewable energy, and thereby to provide relevant and useful information to SHP practitioners, policy and decision-makers, investors, as well as those interested in clean, renewable and local energy and sustainable development.

Aims of the WSHPDR 2013

The need to compile a comprehensive global report on SHP was long overdue, since extensive scattered information already existed on SHP at the project, country and regional levels, as well as in different languages. However, a comprehensive reference publication for decision-makers, managers and potential investors had been lacking for quite some time. In order to promote SHP more effectively as a renewable and rural energy source, and to overcome existing barriers, it is essential to identify its development status in the different regions and get potential stakeholders on board. The report contains a general overview of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, North America and Latin

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