Biomass Thermal Energy Council Update

Tax Extenders/Tax Policy
Before moving into recess until after the November 4 midterm elections, the US Senate Finance Committee started discussions about a comprehensive tax reform in the context of energy tax credits. In this light, tax breaks for fossil fuels as well as renewable fuels will be discussed.

While the biomass thermal industry had enjoyed a US$300 tax credit for residential wood and pellet stoves, BTEC's approach is to support technology-neutral tax reform that includes provisions for thermal energy on a level comparable to other clean energy sources.

Bulk Pellet Storage
BTEC has completed the second edition in a series of bulk pellet fuel "Best Practices" guiding documents, "Quality and Safety Assurance for the Delivery of Loose Bulk Wood Pellets for Small and Medium Scale Central Heating Systems." The creation of the best practices document was led by BTEC members Dutch Dresser of Maline Energy Systems and Scott Nichols of Tarm USA.

BTEC will now assess the viability of transferring the bulk storage and delivery best practices documents to official U.S. standards.

Database and App
In 2014, BTEC has intensified its focus on gathering data and sharing information on the bioenergy industry. One outcome is major improvements to the Wood2Energy database, a growing compilation of North America's wood-consuming and wood-energy industries.

BTEC is also providing support to update and promote the Wood Energy Financial App, a new computer-based application that estimates savings of switching to biomass from other fuel sources (such as propane, natural gas, and heating oil) for thermal energy production.

Supporting the European Economy is Top Priority
Over the past year, the European Biomass Association (AEBIOM) and its members have voiced their concerns about how the EU is threatened by its long-standing dependency on fossil fuel imports from unstable regions. In addition to this, the EU still faces a major economic and social crisis. In this context, bioenergy provides the potential to boost markets, create jobs and cut energy costs.

In order to show why biomass counts and why we can count on biomass, AEBIOM is preparing communication activities that are meant to spread the word. On the 3rd of December 2014 AEBIOM is organizing a high-level event entitled "Sustainable biomass backs European Economy." This event will bring key stakeholders together to share their views on the growing role of bioenergy in the context of the on-going economic crisis and the growing need for EU energy security.

The event will come shortly after the publication of the AEBIOM Statistical Report, a comprehensive collection of data on bioenergy, based on data provided by AEBIOM members and on data published in many different documents. This report contributes to a better understanding of bioenergy developments in Europe and will provide strong and reliable data for the above mentioned event.

In order for biomass to play its expected important role, AEBIOM is of the view that an ambitious 2030 climate and energy framework based on a binding national renewable energy target should be set. Also, to ensure that biomass keeps developing under a sustainable framework, EU harmonized sustainability criteria, both realistic and proportionate, should be established.

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CHP can Power EU Recovery
A new COGEN Europe position paper urges policymakers to design EU energy, climate and industrial policies that work in harmony to harness the potential of combined heat and power (CHP) to deliver the energy that industry needs. Increasing the CHP base in European industries can improve company competitiveness, thus contribute to the industrial renaissance for Europe's economic recovery, improve the efficiency and reduce the total cost of the whole power system the paper argues.

Of the 106 GW CHP electrical capacity in the EU, around half is embedded in industry – saving the EU 15 Mt of fuel imports per annum and delivering 58 Mt of CO2 emissions savings annually. Within a sustainable energy services market, industries that adopt renewable CHP can assist power networks as they incorporate higher levels of renewables.

CHP plants offer firm capacity and their supply of electricity is predictable and reliably available. The average plant size is modest allowing industrial CHP plants to offer a range of services through the aggregation of their capabilities. New modular CHP designs featuring heat buffers, is emerging against the backdrop of increased demand for more flexibility in the energy system.

Finnish Biogas: Use in Transport Dominates Growth
During the last decade the use of biogas in transportation has grown 5400-fold in Finland according to Arto Lampinen the author of a new biogas statistical report.

In 2013 the use of biogas grew by 108 percent, whereas biogas for electricity production dropped 5 percent and for heat production decreased by 1 percent compared to the previous year. Raw biogas production increased by 2 percent. All upgraded biogas was produced from biowastes, 79225 liquid solid, and all was consumed in vehicles, none for heat or power.

Capacity roll-out
In 2014 upgrading capacity has thus far increased. Currently there are 9 upgrading plants enabling over 100 GWh of annual production. And there are plans for over 10-fold increase of the capacity by 2017. Of 19 upgrading plants, 5 inject into the national gas grid and 6 into a local biomethane network. In one upgrading plant Compressed BiGas (CBG) for truck transport are also utilized.

There are 24 public biogas filling stations operated by 7 companies. All retail 100% CBG. Biomethane blends are not available. There are no public Liquidated BioGas (LBG) stations, but private and mobile filling stations offer both CBG and LBG. There are plans for 20 new filling stations by 2016.