

Press release

European Commission ensures biomass leading role in reaching the renewables targets

Brussels, 26 February 2010. The Consortium of European Biomass Associations (AEBIOM and EUBIA), European forest owner associations (EUSTAFOR, CEPF and NSF) and European Biogas Association (EBA) welcomes the European Commission's report on sustainability criteria for solid and gaseous biomass for heat and electricity. The non-binding measures proposed will enable member states to ensure the sustainability of biomass whilst providing adequate opportunities to mobilise biomass resources.

The Directive for the promotion of energy from renewable sources [RES Directive] set out sustainability criteria for biofuels and bioliquids and indicated that the European Commission should report on sustainability criteria of solid biomass. With the new Commission now in place, the report on sustainability criteria of solid biomass was published yesterday. The report clearly states that it is too early to impose harmonised sustainability criteria for solid and gaseous biomass.

Mr Jean-Marc Jossart, Secretary General of the European Biomass Association (AEBIOM), commenting on the report states *"The European Commission provides an accurate analysis of the current state of biomass use for heating, cooling and electricity and proposes adequate measures such as the non-binding **recommendations to the Member States** on how to ensure the sustainability of biomass"*.

According to Mr Martin Lindell from the European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR), this will enable each Member State to have necessary guidelines whilst still having a possibility to adapt to their particular national situation. Those recommendations will surely minimise the risks of the development of incompatible criteria at national level, leading to barriers to trade and limiting the growth of the bioenergy sector.

The Commission recommends the Member States to use similar criteria to those established in the RES directive for biofuels and bioliquids. This includes the prohibition to use biomass from land converted from forest, other high carbon stock areas and highly biodiverse areas. Furthermore, the recommendations set a minimum Greenhouse gas saving requirement of 35% and promote the monitoring of origin of biomass. In addition, the European Commission promotes differentiation of national support schemes in favour of high energy efficiency installations. Contrary to the RES Directive, it is recommended that the greenhouse saving is not applied to wastes.

"In general, biomass markets of energy, animal feed and food in the EU are interdependent. Therefore, no binding measures for only one of these sectors would ensure that biomass for energy is not discriminated vis-a-vis other biomass markets such as food or animal feed", adds Sebastian Stolpp from European Biogas Association (EBA).

Mr Morten Thoro, Secretary General of the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF), welcomes the Commission decision proposing "light" measures as the risks of using unsustainable biomass are low. The EU biomass production is covered already by the existing framework for agriculture, forestry and environment. This

includes the cross-compliance rules, environmental legislation, sustainable forest management practice and voluntary forest certification scheme.

Furthermore, the consortium supports the recommendation/decision to exclude small scale producers and users from the criteria (<1MW thermal and <1 MW electrical capacity). Eibhilin Manning, EUBIA underlines the significance of this recommendation as a necessary top-down approach to ensure no substantial costs nor unnecessary administrative barriers are imposed.

The report is accompanied by an impact assessment that rightly points out that binding criteria would impose substantial costs on European economic actors, bearing in mind that at least 90 % of biomass consumed in the EU comes from European forest residues and by-products of other industries. Nevertheless, the voluntary schemes at national and company levels are welcomed.

For further information, please contact:

Edita Vagonyte, **AEBIOM** - European Biomass Association, vagonyte@aebiom.org; +32 24 00 10 22
Eibhilin Manning, **EUBIA** - European Biomass Industry Association, eibhilin.manning@eubia.org; +32 24 00 10 20
Martin Lindell, **EUSTAFOR** - European State Forest Association, martin.lindell@eustafor.eu, +32 22 39 23 04
Morten Thoro, **CEPF** – European Family Forestry, morten.thoro@cepf-eu.org; +32 22 39 23 00
Satu Lanttiainen, **NSF** - Bureau of Nordic Family Forestry, satu.lanttiainen@nordicforestry.org; +32 22 82 46 66
Sebastian Stolpp, **EBA** – European Biogas Association, stolpp@european-biogas.eu; +49 81 61 98 46 77