European Industrial Pellet Suppliers (EIPS) Update

Biomass sustainability (EU legislation under preparation) and carbon accounting are some of the main EU policy priorities of the group.

After an excellent start in 2010, 2011 and 2012, we are proud to announce the 4th AEBIOM Bioenergy Conference 2013.

With 300 international participants in the field of biomass production and supply, planning, and bioenergy production, representatives from the EC and EP and NGOs, the AEBIOM Bioenergy Conference has become Europe’s major occasion for discussion and networking amongst important industry leaders and policy makers.

The conference will provide an ideal platform for everyone who wishes to get the latest news on sustainable bioenergy and exchange views and experience.

This year the main topics of debate will be the sustainability criteria of solid/gaseous biomass and the worrying carbon neutrality debate. Against this background, AEBIOM has invited representatives from the European Commission and the European Parliament to give their perspective on the needs of the future promotional framework.

Further information can be found on the event homepage at www.aebiom.org/conference.

The group of the European Industrial Pellet Suppliers (EIPS) held its 5th meeting on April 16th in London within the framework of the Argus conference.

This group was established in 2012 in order to promote the use of European industrial pellets as energy carrier and to represent the interests of all actors involved in the supply chain of pellets production and trading. A. Dale (Ekman) and L. Spohr (Vis Nova Trading) are chair and vice chair of the group which is coordinated from Brussels by F.P. Langue as General Manager.

Eleven companies have joined EIPS

4 producers: Kurzemes Granulas Ltd-LV; Latgran – LV; ETH Umwelt-DE; SBE-LV

5 traders: Ekman-SE; Elof Hansson-SE; Evolution Markets –UK; Renergy UK ltd-UK; Vis Nova Trading-DE

2 supporting members: Charmont Investments-UK and CPM Europe-NL

Biomass sustainability (EU legislation under preparation) and carbon accounting are some of the main EU policy priorities of the group.

EIPS members are in favour of an EU harmonised sustainability scheme for solid biomass used in the heating and electricity sector in order to secure investments, facilitate trade and to bring proofs to the society that the sector is strongly committed to sustainability.

On carbon accounting, the group is eager to explain with concrete arguments that European pellets allow to achieve GHG emissions savings compared to fossil fuels.

In addition to strengthening its representation towards EU Policy makers, the group aims at communicating towards the external world to explain the benefits of the industrial pellets sector. Also, the group will react when necessary on strong unbalanced criticisms brought by certain media, as it did with its response to two negative articles published by The Economist” (response published online by the magazine).

The group will also continue to work in collaboration with European utilities on the sustainability file as well as unified pellet specs, standard contracts etc. Finally, EIPS members can use the group as a platform of exchange on common issues such as contracting or safety.

Coming EIPS events
17-19 June: EIPS session during the European Bioenergy Conference (http://www.aebiom.org/conference/)
Next EIPS meeting: autumn 2013.

Fanny Langue
BI65/3876/AS

For more information on the EIPS group, you can contact FP Langue (fanny.langue@aebiom.org) www.aebiom.org
BTEC Promotes Thermal Tax Parity During International Biomass Expo Opening Panel

"If you want to sell more biomass fuels, with the recognition that it's clean and sustainable and reliable, you need to promote tax parity. Reflect that in the tax code." That was the rallying cry of BTEC's Executive Director during the General Session at the International Biomass Conference and Expo, April 9 in Minneapolis, MN.

Seymour used the five-person panel to stress the importance of creating a level playing field for energy incentives. Biomass thermal technologies are still excluded from Sections 25D and 48C of the tax code, provisions that support other renewable technologies like solar, solar thermal, biomass power, and geothermal, among others.

Executive Directors from the Biomass Power Association and U.S. Industrial Pellet Association shared related policy concerns, focusing on the Environmental Protection Agency's biogenic emissions process.

Interest in BTEC was strong at the conference, as staff had to reprint the association's "About Us" and tax factsheets once the booth's reserves were exhausted. Seymour also used the opportunity to discuss BTEC's tax recommendations for biomass thermal technologies, informally named the High Efficiency Affordable Thermal (HEAT) Act of 2013. The factsheet on the residential and commercial incentives is available on http://biomassthermal.org/pdf/Heat_Act_2013.pdf

Perfect spring weather greeted the hundreds in attendance for the Northeast Biomass Heating Expo in Saratoga Springs, NY. The 5th annual BTEC conference began Wednesday, April 3rd with the Agricultural Biomass Heating Seminar and concluded Friday, April 5th with a candid "vision and challenges for the Northeast" roundtable.

The formal conference kick-off was headlined with a keynote from Rep. Paul Tonko, in which he implored the audience to support organizations like BTEC and voice their concerns for biomass and tax reform. Other sessions were filled with building professionals, as speakers David Dungate and John Siegenthaler presented on hydronics and improving biomass system efficiency, offering continuing education credits for the engineering and architectural fields.

First International Workshop on Pellet Safety held in Austria

Over 70 experts from 13 countries attended the First International Workshop on Pellet Safety convened by the European Pellet Council, AEBIOM and the SafePellets project. Participants included researchers, pellet producers, utilities, producers of pelleting and safety equipment, representatives of associations, inspection bureaus, investors and pellet logistics.

Open space
The workshop was organized as an open space event, meaning that the participants convened sessions on topics they considered relevant. Overall 27 sessions where convened covering a wide range of safety issues. The two most intensely debated issues were safety issues related to pellet storage and pellet production followed by human health and safety, and safety issues in transport and related to second-generation pellets.

Self heating
An issue most operators of large pellet storage silos have is self heating. Discussions centered around possible influencing factors for self heating and ways of adequately monitoring storage conditions.

Researchers from the Safe Pellets project presented their ongoing investigations on self heating and close cooperation with industry in this question was agreed upon.

Besides topics related to large industrial storage, safety issues concerning small scale domestic pellet storage were also discussed. The second most intensively debated issue was safety in pellet production.

The visit at the 100,000 t Binderholz pellet plant right next to the conference venue created an excellent opportunity to discuss safety issues right on the spot.

Workshops circled around the question of preventing fires and explosions in pellet production plants. Best practices for the set up and operation of pellet plants have not yet been established.

The Wood Pellet Association of Canada has developed a safety certification for pellet producers together with insurance companies. WPAC is offering to use this certification scheme also in Europe and the USA as a means of establishing a better level of general safety in pellet production.

Two workshops dealt with the possibilities to improve safety storage by using second generation pellets which could be stored outside and with other specific issues related to the use of torrefied or steam treated pellets.

Safety handbook
A topic intensively discussed was the question, how to enable the industry to share information about incidents, to enhance learning and speedy implementation of adequate safety measures for all potential risks.

The workshop ended with a number of sessions focussing on concrete follow-up activities. It was decided to start working on a pellet safety handbook covering both production and issues along the diverse supply chains. A working group was established to develop a guidance document that outlines occupational safety and health concerns related to pellet production and use. A web based communication platform for the pellet safety community will be established by the EPC in cooperation with the Safe Pellets project team. This platform will also allow reporting of safety relevant events.

Finally, it was decided to convene a follow up event within a year about how to learn about the results of on-going research and follow-up activities and to debate what needs to be done to further safety in the sector. EPC will announce a venue and date. For documentation: www.pelletcouncil.eu/en/safety-workshop

Christian Rakos
B163/3894/AS

Successful Northeast Biomass Heating Expo

The export of wood pellets from North America to Europe reached a new record of 3.2 million tons in 2012, according to the North American Wood Fiber review. The export increased over 60 percent from 2011 with US exporters more than doubling their shipments. The export industry from North America has grown fast, increasing their export value from 40 million dollars in 2004 to almost 400 million dollars in 2012. The expansion of pellet production has been particularly noteworthy in the U.S. South where there have been 14 new pellet plants that are either new or planning to expand production in the coming year.

Woody biomass, including wood pellets, has attracted much attention in a number of countries on the European continent. With limited domestic wood raw-material sources, countries such as the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands have increasingly relied on the importation of industrial wood pellets.

Europe has increased their interest in importing pellets from British Columbia and the southern states of the U.S. where wood raw-material costs are lower than in Europe.