

Title



Europe plans to produce over half of its renewable energy from bioenergy sources by 2020, which is over 10% of the total energy consumption. BirdLife fully support the need to move away from fossil sources, but there are significant risks associated with this increased use in bioenergy, which are currently neglected in the policies driving the use of biomass.

The use of biomass is not 100% carbon neutral and the use of certain types of biomass might even lead to carbon emissions exacerbating climate change. The current greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting systems don't fully acknowledge all the emissions, which is misleading when developing policies to halt climate change.

Biomass is also a limited resource and it is not only the energy sector that needs it. If uncontrolled, the expansion and intensification of forest management and logging activities to produce biomass can lead to further degradation of forest ecosystems.

In order to succeed, EU bioenergy policy must be developed within an overall **framework that reduces overall energy demand** and increases energy efficiency, which seeks to minimize energy production from combustion sources.

Biomass can still play a role in the mix of renewable energies in Europe but the supply of biomass for energy production needs to be constrained to what can be sustainably supplied from the forests.

It is also crucial to use sustainable biomass efficiently through “**cascading use**” i.e. when biomass is used for material products first and the energy content is recovered from the end-of-life products. At each stage of the cascading, sustainable biomass should be dedicated in priority to sectors where there is no other sustainable

alternative to achieve emissions reduction.

We advocate for a **mandatory sustainability scheme** to be developed to regulate the production and use of biomass for energy. A sustainability scheme should prevent extraction of energy biomass from valuable ecosystems, such as pristine forests, lands with high carbon stocks and high-biodiversity value, wetlands and peat lands. It should also take into account the upfront carbon debt of wood-based bioenergy and the length of time required for the emissions to become carbon neutral.

Related topics

- [Climate Change - our Programme](#)
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- [Biofuels](#)
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 - [The post 2020 climate and energy package](#)
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Publications

- [Bioenergy: carbon accounting time bomb \(2010\)](#)
 - [Joanneum Research Study \(Zanchi G, Pena N., Bird N., The upfront carbon debt of bioenergy, Graz, Joanneum Research - June 2010\)](#)
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- [Joint EU NGOs briefing on biomass sustainability for energy \(2012\)](#)