Title

Currently EU bioenergy policy can be found under the climate and energy package. This package consists of several pieces of legislation, each of them forming a piece of the puzzle to tackle climate change.

The goal is that by 2020, the European Union will:

- save 20% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions compared to 1990
- cover 20% of its energy consumption by renewable energy sources
- improve energy efficiency by 20% (this is a non-binding goal)

The Renewable Energy Directive (RED) and Fuel Quality Directive (FQD)

The RED is one of the most stringent parts of the package. It sets namely two targets which Member States need to attain by 2020.

The first target states that 20% of the overall EU energy consumption by 2020 needs to come from renewables. In this case we are mainly talking about electricity, heating and cooling.

The second target is that 10% of the overall EU energy consumption in transport needs to come from renewables by 2020. This mainly refers to transport fuels, but it can also be reached through electricity, etc.

The RED basically asks Member States to set up a system, which they need to describe in their National Renewable Energy Action Plans (NREAPs), to attain to these numbers which often happens through subsidies, tax exemptions and consumption mandates.

The Member State Action Plans have now shown that biomass will supply more than

half of the EU's renewable energy by 2020 and over 8.3% (hence almost the entire 10%) of the transport target. *This will mean a steep rise in the use of biomass for energy and that growth comes with a risk of serious socio-environmental costs.*

The demand is also likely to exceed the sustainable level of biomass supply. Moreover, this policy is paid for by the European taxpayers. *For the transport policy alone this means 6 billion Euros in subsidies for mainly unsustainable biofuels.*

The RED has sustainability criteria for raw materials going into biofuels and bioliquids. All other use of biomass has no sustainability requirements at all. Moreover, the criteria for biofuels are not stringent enough or have not yet been fully implemented. The current sustainability criteria also do not secure GHG savings, since it doesn't recognize the emissions caused by Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC).

Another part of the package is **the FQD**. This directive tackles the issue of clean and dirty fuels. By 2020, fuel suppliers need to show that they are mixing cleaner fuels in their fuel mix so that they are decarbonizing their fuels with 6%.

This directive aims to tackle both dirty fossil fuels and the mixing in of biofuels that are saving emissions. The FQD does not just set blunt consumption mandates, but allows different types of fuels to compete not only on production costs but also on their GHG savings.

Attempts to deal with sustainability criteria for biofuels and bioliquids

Neither biofuels or bioliquids, although there are sustainability criteria for both the RED and the FQD, take ILUC into account. BirdLife believes it is key to take up ILUC factors in the sustainability criteria while at the same time putting in place a strong cap on the use of all land based biofuels. To avoid repeating mistakes the advanced biofuels (made from waste and residues) should get stringent sustainability criteria.

(No) attempts to deal with sustainability criteria for biomass

For biomass used in the energy sector for heating, cooling or electricity production the RED doesn't require any kind of sustainability criteria. The directive never the less obliged the European Commission to follow the development of biomass use and report on the need to extend the sustainability scheme.

The Commission's report in 2010 stated that it didn't see a need to extend the scheme to biomass but encouraged Member States to introduce their own sustainability schemes for bioenergy. This was despite the fact that 90% of the respondents of a related consultation were in favour of a sustainability scheme for all types of biomass.

Since then, Member States have not shown much interest to follow the Commission's recommendation. As the use of biomass has sharply grown, more and more questionable practices in its use have been reported. The pressure for the Commission to make a proposal on sustainability criteria has thus steadily increased.

Other parts of the Climate and Energy Package

Further more, the package includes legislation on the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) and the Effort Sharing Directive. The former is a tool for reducing industrial greenhouse gas emissions through a cap and trade system. The Effort Sharing

Decision establishes binding annual greenhouse gas emission targets for Member States for the period 2013–2020. These targets concern emissions from most sectors not included in the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), such as transport (except aviation), buildings, agriculture and waste.

Related topics

- Climate Change - our Programme

- Biofuels
- Biomass
- Carbon accounting
- Current EU Bioenergy policy
- The post 2020 climate and energy package
- Role of bioenergy in the post 2020 energy mix
- Back to EU Bioenergy homepage

Biomass

Bioenergy is energy derived from recently grown organic material (known as biomass, as opposed to fossil fuels that are ancient fossilized biomass). Bioenergy can be used in liquid forms such as biofuels for transportation, in gaseous forms like biogas or in solid forms as is the case when burning wood for energy. Bioenergy does emit CO2 and its extraction can cause a host of environmental problems. If done properly, on the other hand, it can help the fight against climate change.

Biofuels

Biofuels are one form of bioenergy, liquid fuel produced from biomass and used for transport. Current biofuels are by far the least efficient form of bioenergy and they require huge amounts of land for feedstock cultivation. Some biofuels are made of waste streams and have a much better environmental record.

- Biofuels on the Dutch market - ranking oil companies in the Netherlands (February 2013)

- A brief assessment of the proposed methodological changes for the RED and FQD (January 2013)
- Uneven returns? The economics of EU biofuels policy (Summary of IISD report, 2013)
- Sustainable alternatives for land-based biofuels in the European Union: Assessment of options and development of a policy strategy (CE Delft report, December 2012)
- Optimising the "grandfathering" of existing biofuels production (2012) - Summary of research carried out by Ecofys "Assessing grandfathering options under an EU ILUC Policy" and NGO Policy recommendations (March 2012)
- Drivers and impacts of Europe's biofuels policy (2012) - Factsheet
- CE Delft Study (Bergsma G. C., Croezen H. J., Otten M. B. J. & van Valkengoed M.P.J., Biofuels: indirect land use change and climate impact, Delft, CE Delft (June 2010)

- Joint NGO statement on advanced biofuels (Sept 2013)
- Putting EU green transport policy back on track - Briefing of CE Delft report on sustainable alternatives for land based biofuels in the EU (2013)
- Briefing - Wastes, residues and co-products for biofuels and bioliquids (2013)
- Joint EU NGOs Position paper on the proposal to address ILUC (January, 2013)
- Open letter on "Biofuels and Carbon footprint" signed by +100 European NGOs (April 2012)
- Joint EU NGOs briefing on biomass sustainability for energy (March 2012)
- International Scientists and Economists Statement on Biofuels and Land Use (2011)