

New studies reveal severe flaws in EU biomass policies

Brussels, 21 May 2014 - New studies released today show that EU plans [1] for bioenergy are not sustainable. Planned biomass demand is likely to exceed the availability of wood and land for energy crops in the EU.

A study by the International Institute for Sustainability Analysis and Strategy (IINAS), the European Forest Institute and Joanneum Research [2] reveals that planned demand for wood will probably outstrip the amount that can be safely and sustainably extracted from European forests. Current policies will lead to a significant increase in pressure on European and world forests, unless the potential of resources such as industrial and harvesting residues and wood from landscape care are fully mobilised – something which is highly unlikely without specific incentives.

A second study from the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) [3] concludes that the amount of land that can be used for energy crops without displacing food or damaging valuable habitats is only 1.3 million hectares, whilst the European Commission foresees a demand five times larger in 2030. According to the scientists the amount of land that could be safely dedicated to energy production in the EU, if entirely absorbed by the transport sector, would only provide 1% of the sector's fuel needs [4].

The studies also show that without the introduction of new policy safeguards, the benefits of bioenergy in the fight against climate change are highly uncertain. If no measures are taken to constrain the use of woody bioenergy, future greenhouse gas emissions from releasing forest carbon stocks would be the same as the EU's annual emission savings between 2005 and 2012. [5] Under current policy assumptions, the use of woody bioenergy will take more than 100 years to reduce emissions.

The studies, commissioned by environmental NGOs Birdlife Europe, the European Environment Bureau (EEB) and Transport & Environment, should trigger a re-think among those who have been eyeing biomass as a cheap and easy way to meet the EU's climate objectives.

“New policies are urgently needed to put the EU's bioenergy use on a sustainable track: it is perverse to fight climate change with 'solutions' that risk exacerbating the problem,” said Sini Eräjää, EU Bioenergy Policy Officer at Birdlife Europe and the EEB.

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[1] [European Commission, IMPACT ASSESSMENT Accompanying the Communication A policy framework for climate and energy in the period from 2020 up to 2030](#)

[2] [IINAS study on the sustainable potential for forest biomass in the EU](#)

[3] [IEEP study on Space for Energy Crops in Europe](#)

[4] Transport sector energy requirement based on 2012 consumption. Table 3 (page 26) of IEEP report

[5] GHG emissions in the EU dropped by an average of 100 Mt CO₂eq per year between 2005 and 2012
<http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/data-viewers/greenhouse-gases-viewer>

[Briefing on space for energy crops in the EU](#)

[Briefing on forest biomass for energy in the EU](#)

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