



Sustainable Forest Biomass in light of COP21 Paris

The role of forests and woody biomass within the EU policy framework on climate and energy was discussed at the European Parliament at the Intergroup Conference “*Sustainable forest biomass in the light of COP21 (Paris)*” on 1 December 2016. The event was held one day after the European Commission’s publication of the recap of the Renewable Energy Directive proposal. The conference provided the opportunity for high-level policy makers from the European Parliament and Commission, representatives of state forest management organizations, the scientific community and other stakeholders to provide their views on the potential of sustainably managed European forests and forest-based products to be at the core of the EU climate change and energy agenda following the Paris Agreement.

The event was co-hosted by **MEP Pavel Poc** (CZ, S&D), Chair of the European Parliament Intergroup on “*Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development*” and **MEP Jytte Guteland** (SE, S&D), Member of the Committee of Environment, Public Health and Food Safety. Opening the conference, **MEP Pavel Poc** stated that “*forests are not only about the production of wood. Their role is broader, including various societal functions, and they are also an important climate regulator and source of biodiversity. We must keep this in mind during any legislative process on both European and national levels. Every legislation which can directly or indirectly impact forest management also impacts forest as one of the defining elements of the European landscape and as one of the key pillars of our planet's ecosystem sustainability. Without exaggeration, our forest management represents our caring for the future of this planet.*” **MEP Jytte Guteland** focused on the key role played by forests “*in combating climate change and transitioning to a sustainable and decarbonized society. Europe needs to unlock our forests’ great potential to provide renewable, bio-based materials and energy in order to reach our climate and energy targets. Through sustainable and flexible solutions, we now have the chance to create real green jobs and innovation while also delivering on the climate. It will be important to ensure enough flexibility for national circumstances so that we can continue to build on existing knowledge and best practices.*”

Per-Olof Wedin (President of the European State Forest Association EUSTAFOR), emphasized that “*care needs to be taken that the policies currently under development do not create negative or perverse results, not only for forests and the forest-based sector themselves, but also for their potential contribution to the post-2020 climate and energy targets.*”

Phil Hogan (European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development) addressed the participants via a short video message in which he underlined that “*forestry remains a key sector for a low-carbon and climate-friendly economy. The development of forest biomass has a huge potential as we expand the European bioeconomy; it needs to be done in a smart and sustainable way.*” **Giulio Volpi** (DG ENER, European Commission) delivered a keynote speech in which he recalled that “*bioenergy plays a key role in the European renewable energy mix and has many benefits in terms of employment*



and economic development in rural areas, energy security and grid balancing, climate protection and innovation. Bioenergy production and use can also be associated to a number of environmental challenges which need to be correctly managed both at EU and Member State level. That is why the European Commission has proposed to strengthen the EU bioenergy sustainability criteria.” **Andrea Vettori** (DG ENV, European Commission) reflected on how sustainable forest management is important for climate change mitigation and adaptation, the preservation of the diversity of forests among Europe and the richness of their biodiversity. He also recognized public forest managers as an essential “link between public authorities and real action on the ground.”

Marcus Lindner (European Forest Institute) presented the results of the latest From Science to Policy report “*Forest Biomass, Carbon Neutrality and Climate Change Mitigation*” which he co-authored. He stated that “there is a high risk of failing to meet long-term climate targets without bioenergy.”

Representatives from State Forest Management Organizations followed with concrete examples of how state forests promote sustainable forest management and the greater utilization of wood, especially to substitute for other resources and products which are detrimental to the climate. Specifically, presentations were held by **Olof Johansson** (Sveaskog, Sweden), **Daniel Szórád** (CEO, Lesy České Republiky), **Pentti Hyttinen** (CEO, Metsähallitus, Finland) and **Roland Kautz** (Österreichische Bundesforste, Austria), showcasing national and regional differences along with the various environmental challenges faced. It was further stressed that there is no one size fits all underlining the importance of flexibility and promoting local solutions.

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