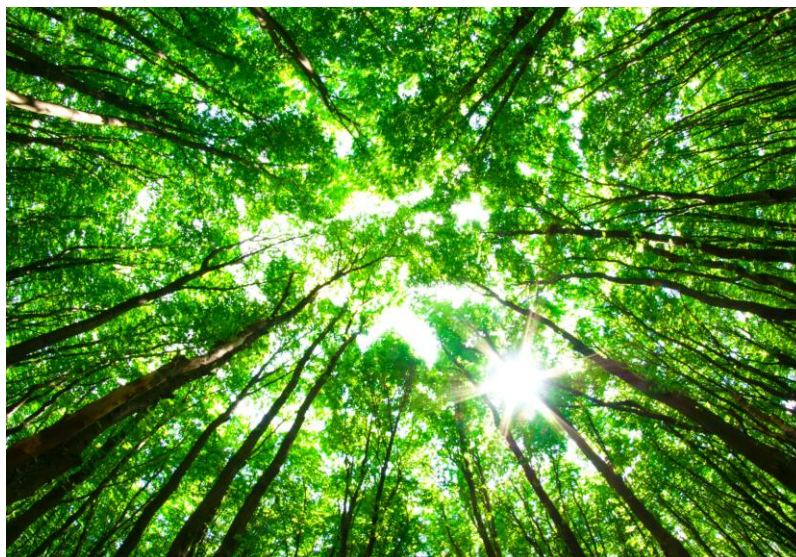




## Online event: European bioeconomy's role in reaching the EU Green Deal targets



Tuesday 21 June 2022, 10:00-11.30 CEST  
Online Event

Hosted by MEP Franc Bogovič

### Speakers:

- **MEP Franc Bogovič**
- **Sampsa Nissinen**, Director of Unit, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Finland
- **Peter Wehrheim**, Head of Unit, Bioeconomy and Food Systems (DG RTD), European Commission
- **Maarit Lindström**, Director and Chief Economist, Finnish Forest Industries Federation (FFIF)
- **Kelsey Perlman**, Forest and Climate Campaigner, FERN
- **Tomáš Krejzar**, Director, Department of Forest Policy and Economics, Ministry of Agriculture, Czech Republic
- **MEP Elsi Katainen**
- **MEP Petri Sarvamaa**
- **MEP Simone Schmiedtbauer**

## Welcome Remarks

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### **MEP Franc Bogovič**

**“Bioeconomy is crucial for the transition to a circular and climate neutral economy”**

**MEP Franc Bogovič**, started by saying that the **report comes at a crucial time for Europe, in the middle of the biggest energy crisis and in the middle of the Green Deal legislation**. As quoted, *“bioeconomy is crucial for the transition to a circular and climate neutral economy”* since it helps to substitute carbon-intensive fossil-based materials. The European Commission strategy for 2050 called a “clean planet for all”, identified that bioeconomy and circular economy are key strategic areas to achieve a climate neutral economy. At the same time, sustainable biomass has an important role in the net-zero greenhouse gas economy. Moving on, he underlined that **security of supply of raw materials is key**. Furthermore, Mr. Bogovič **explained how bioeconomy can contribute to reaching the objectives of the Green Deal**. However, due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the future implementation of the EU bioeconomy action plan must take into account the prices of energy in the global supply chain.

## Presentation

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### **Sampsa Nissinen, Director of Unit, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Finland**

**“Bioeconomy can play a role for both climate and security”**

**Mr. Nissinen** kicked off his presentation by mentioning that *“bioeconomy can play a role for both climate and security”*. Moving on, he addressed Finland's bioeconomy strategy, mentioning it has been updated and that each Member State should do the same. Indeed, **it is important to fully understand the link of the bioeconomy strategy with government strategies and policy programs**. Mr. Nissinen highlighted that ecological, social, and economic sustainability of bioresources and biodiversity are the key starting points for the process of

the strategy. Moving on, he mentioned that **the most promising areas are the wood-based materials which are key enablers of the green transition of European industry**. The main aim of the Finnish strategy has been the preparation of systematic action for developing the bioeconomy of added value. To conclude, Mr. Nissinen emphasised the need to **“take bioeconomy seriously”**, particularly with regard to its major role in the national strategy in relation to industrial and climate policy. Finally, he underlined the importance of encouraging bioeconomy innovation.

## Panel Discussion

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On behalf of the EP Intergroup, **moderator Mr. Ilias Grampas** kicked off the panel discussion by asking: *“what is the role of bioeconomy in reaching the EU Green deal ambitions and targets?”*

***Peter Wehrheim, Head of Unit, Bioeconomy and Food Systems (DG RTD), European Commission***

**“It will be crucial that the guiding principles of the bioeconomy pay more attention to resource efficiency, circularity of biomass and utilising the cascading principle”**

**Mr. Wehrheim** mentioned that **bioeconomy can make a vital contribution to the objectives of the EU green deal, such as Farm to Fork, biodiversity, climate and energy objectives**. However, Mr. Wehrheim quoted that *“if the EU wants to meet all these targets at the same time, it has to do it better today”*. Moving on, he underlined that biomass will be a precious element in the entire equation. It will indeed **be crucial that the guiding principles of the bioeconomy pay more attention to resource efficiency, the circularity of biomass, and utilising the cascading principle**. Overall, he stressed that bioeconomy creates opportunities for agriculture, and forestry by creating new jobs in primary production and at the same time increasing and diversifying rural incomes.

**Maarit Lindström, Director and Chief Economist, Finnish Forest Industries Federation (FFIF)**

**“European forest and the forest based sector can provide net-zero emissions to tackle global climate challenges”.**

Ms. Lindström started by underlining that **“the European forest and the forest-based sector can provide net-zero emissions to tackle global climate challenges”**, which is also the vision for the forest-based industries for 2050. As quoted, *“the goal is to help decarbonise Europe by substituting CO2 intensive raw materials with forest-based alternatives”*. At the same time, the wood-based industries represent 20% of the manufacturing enterprising in the EU, representing an added value of 143 billion euros and 4 million jobs in the European economy. Moving on she highlights that there is **still untouched potential when it comes to contributing to the green deal targets**. As quoted, *“in the EU strategy, we need to do more”*. **She underlined the suggestion of industrial alliances for wood-based bioproducts.**

**Kelsey Perlman, Forest and Climate Campaigner, FERN**

**“Bioeconomies have to move towards a future for foresters and forest managers that are preserving their livelihood”.**

Ms. Perlman expressed concerns about environmental degradation done through forestry practices and unrestricted wood demand and suggested to look at ‘bioeconomies’ instead of a ‘bioeconomy’ focusing on transformation of wood. She stated that **“bioeconomies have to move towards a future for foresters and forest managers that are preserving their livelihood”**. Ms. Perlman underlined the importance of moving from intensive timber production towards nature-based forestry and further diversifying the sector to mitigate future risks. She emphasized developing employment in areas such as recreation, monitoring, and training, which are desperately needed in the sector. The role of the bioeconomy should bring diversity to the landscape, practices, and employment, in order to adapt to a warming climate.

**Tomáš Krejzar, Director, Department of Forest Policy and Economics, Ministry of Agriculture, Czech Republic**

**“Forests are not the source of problems but victims of climate change and its impact on nature”**

**Mr. Krejzar** agreed that **when supporting bioeconomy, it is necessary to create adaptation for forests to climate change and increase their resilience to climate change.** He mentioned that **“forests are not the source of problems but victims of climate change and its impact on nature”**. Moving on, he mentioned that over the past 30 years, the structure of the EU forests changed, particularly because of subsidies provided by the Member States and the EU. As for the Czech Republic’s strategy, the plan is to have a comprehensive payment for ecosystem services that would encourage forest owners to adapt forests to climate change and contribute to solving the biodiversity crisis. Moving on, he assessed that at the national level, a comprehensive wood policy both on the demand and supply sides is needed.

Moving on in the panel discussion, **moderator Mr. Grampas** asked the question: *“how has the bioeconomy contributed to the objectives of the EU Green Deal?”*

**Mr. Wehreim** quoted that **“there is a lot of momentum regarding bioeconomy in Member States and the regions”**. Moving on, he underlined that the **bioeconomy continues to be a crucial policy for the EU**. It contributes to the EU Green Deal objectives and at the same time enables sustainable, just transition pathways to a climate-neutral and nature positive 2050. Regarding the current food and energy crisis, bioeconomy policy led to a transition to a resilient and sustainable food system and clean energy. However, **additional focus is needed on the biosphere stewardship strategy and consumption-based framework**. To conclude, **Mr. Wehreim**, put focus on the **Bioeconomy Conference** to present the Progress report on the EU Bioeconomy Strategy on 6 and 7th October 2022.

Moving on, **Moderator Mr. Ilias Grampas** asked the panelists what the key takeaways are on the work of bioeconomy. According to **Mr. Wehreim**, bioeconomy means opportunities for green growth. **Ms. Lindström** stated that *“we want to be the change that we wish to see in the world”*. **Ms. Perlman** answered the need to avoid the simplicity of forest management as well as to make the sector much more diverse. Finally, **Mr. Krejzar** affirmed that forests will recover and provide benefits for future generations.

## Reactions from MEPs

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### **MEP Elsi Katainen**

**“The EU must find sources which are sustainable and renewable and bioeconomy is a tailored solution for this”**

**Ms. Katainen** highlighted that transition away from fossil energy was forced to happen quicker than expected because of the war in Ukraine. She stated as quoted *“the EU must find sources which are sustainable and renewable and bioeconomy is a tailored solution for this”*. Moving on, it was emphasised that the EU should see the benefits of bioeconomy for biodiversity issues to all its bioproducts and potential use. She mentioned that **not only the quantity of biobased products is important but also the quality and economic value**. Furthermore, Ms. Katainen strongly welcomed Finland’s new bioeconomy strategy as well as the Commission’s proposal to double products on biotests.

### **MEP Petri Sarvamaa**

**“The EU needs more bioeconomy and only well managed resilient forest can contribute to bioeconomy”.**

**Mr. Sarvamaa** pointed out three points regarding the bioeconomy strategy. First, **get rid of ideologies**. Second, **science is the key**. Third, **get the facts right**. Moving on, Mr. Sarvamaa stated as quoted *“the EU needs more bioeconomy and only well managed resilient forests can contribute to bioeconomy”*. His message is that **the EU has to revise the renewable energy directive**. In this regard, he mentioned that sustainable forest management plays an absolutely crucial role. To conclude, he argued that the goals of **the EU Green Deal would be impossible to achieve without having a smart and sustainable bioeconomy that can be done through sustainable forest management**. Mr. Sarvamaa also considered the option of repressing the Member States to adopt sustainable bioeconomy but argued that it would be

at the expense of subsidiarity losses for the EU. Finally, he stated as quoted, “*doing sustainable bioeconomy means innovation, innovation needs companies, companies need investments*”.

### **MEP Simone Schmiedtbauer (video-message)**

**“With renewable resources in Europe, the EU can boost the economy and improve circularity by the replacement of fossil inputs with renewable bio based inputs”**

**Ms. Schmiedtbauer** stated that the EU faces the challenge of delivering the EU Green Deal, enabling economic recovery and increasing Europe’s global competitiveness. She emphasised that EU’s fields and forests grow what is **one of the answers to the challenge Europe faces: powerful renewable bio based resources**. Moving on, she highlighted that a sustainable future must boost circular and bioeconomy, and foster sustainable consumption starting with the sustainability of the materials we use at the source. **Ms. Schmiedtbauer** considered that **“with renewable resources in Europe, the EU can boost the economy and improve circularity by the replacement of fossil inputs with renewable bio-based inputs”**. However, she mentioned that this approach is not supported by everyone in Brussels and that ideology approaches are very present. Moving on, she argued that EU decision-makers often fall to rather short visions instead of adopting a generation-based approach. She highlighted **the need to use the strength of rural regions when it comes to sustainable raw material supply**. To conclude, she stated that fossil times must come to an end. Hence, the EU must work on its energy independence. In this regard, bioeconomy must lead the way toward real transition and a greener Europe.

## Q&A Session

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On behalf of the EP Intergroup, **moderator Mr. Ilias Grampas** addressed the following question to **Ms. Lindström**: *“what about the role of wood-based carbon storage products in light of climate ambition?”* **Ms. Lindström** stressed that one of the advantages of the private market economy-based forest industry and the wood trade is that raw material is quite expensive and is used very efficiently. All the parts of the tree are used for the best possible purpose and some are used for long-term carbon storage. The other parts can be used for



material-based and hygiene products. For Mr. **Wehrheim**, *“the longer a lived-product can be, the better it will be for climate”*. In this regard, **research innovation has an important role to play and more needs to be done to develop the use of long-lived products from bioeconomy.**

**Moderator Mr. Ilias Grampas** addressed the next question to **Mr. Wehrheim**: *“what shall we expect from the bioeconomy Conference to be held in Brussels later in October 2022?”* **Mr. Wehrheim** highlighted that **the Conference will try to bring the bioeconomy strategy progress report to the attention of a big audience.** The Conference will be used as a forum to take stock of past achievements, present challenges and look at path-ways and policy options for the bioeconomy.

Moving on during the Q&A, the following question was asked by **moderator Mr. Ilias Grampas to Ms. Lindström** about Finland’s new bioeconomy strategy: *“are there any key points in this framework that you would like to highlight for the growth of bio-based industries?”* **Ms. Lindström** stated that one of the key points is the focus on the value-added to the production and not the amount of the production. She mentioned that it is important that the private companies that make innovations have the right investments to create a better future, that they have the market-based strategies, the public sectors, and politicians to support the creation of a good environment. In that perspective, she argued that Finland's bioeconomy strategy is the one to be followed by industries and forest industry’s owners.

## Closing Remarks

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### **MEP Franc Bogovič**

**“Facing with new challenges (Covid-19, the war in Ukraine, food security and poverty), sustainable forest management and bio-based industry can play a very important role in dealing with these challenges”**

**Mr. Bogovič** recalled that facing new issues caused by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, **the EU needs to be resilient and needs to reinforce its sustainable forest management and bio-based industry** as they can play a very important role in dealing with these challenges. Moving on, he mentioned that it is necessary to take into account the three pillars of



sustainability for sustainable forest management. **The EU needs a social dimension, big diversification, and a green market economy.**