Union of European Foresters
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A position paper on renewable bioenergy from the forest

"Wood – a regenerating raw material for the future"

As professional foresters are key actors in the sector we believe that we have the potential to improve the energy supply by diversifying energy production and raw material resources.

The energy demand – and CO2 emissions – in the world is understood to be increasing by 60% over the next 30 years. Raw material and power supply in the world economy are strongly connected to the use of fossil sources of energy. Exhaustion of these resources, threatens energy supply security on a long-term basis.

Sustainable forestry practices, producing raw material- wood, will be highly valued in the future. Wood is gaining increased attention as a carbon neutral energy source to replace non-renewable energy sources.

It becomes increasingly clear that catastrophic climatic consequences are to be expected and wood will play a major role in combating climate change.

Biomass is the main renewable energy resource globally and will remain so into the foreseeable future. Increasing price volatility for oil and gas will continue and consequently wood will be more and more used as an energy raw material. In Europe, bioenergy will play an important role in the sustainable energy system. By 2020 the share of biomass for energy use is expected to rise to 20%, of which at least half will come from the forest.

According to international agreements there are challenging goals for reducing emissions both on EU and national levels. There is a substantial contribution for climatic protection and a lasting resources safety device in the ongoing use of wood. The use of wood as a raw material and for energy needs will make an indispensable contribution and must be developed and promoted.

Wood and all other forest resources must be used in the most efficient and sustainable way to give an enhanced value from the processes.

The added value factor of the wood products industry compared to bioenergy sector is 10. The social value factor, of which employment plays a major role, of the wood products industry compared to bioenergy sector is 30.

There must be functioning systems for project funding and financing in the European Union giving the bioenergy sector good potential to develop further.

10% of the forest areas are protected or outside commercial use. Forest area is increasing by some 400,000 ha per year and the E U must continue to be proactive in the promotion of afforestation and reforestation programmes. It must also ensure that financial support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) is available to support EU and National Rural Development plans (2007-2013).

Forest resources in the European Union must be more intensively and efficiently used.

The annual increment of the 160 million ha of forests in the EU is estimated to at circa 570 million m3 each year. Harvesting is estimated at 315 million m3, which is only 55% of the annual increment. There are large national, regional and local variations in the use of the forest resources in Europe.

There is a clear potential to harvest more wood on a sustainable basis in most parts of Europe. We must improve our knowledge on forest resource availability, location, access and harvesting conditions, and on the challenges and obstacles that present in the mobilization of these resources. Experience from best forest practice together with accurate forest inventories will help in meeting these challenges.

Utilization of up to 85 % of the annual increment should be a general goal for European forests. This would mean increased harvesting of at least 170 million m3 and would be a considerable support to the implementation of the EU Biomass Action Plan.

There is an obvious need for more wood at both industry and energy levels. There is a good possibility to use more wood also for bioenergy if the development of the sector is balanced. Therefore is a need for wood-based energy and forest products markets to be developed on a strategic and operational basis.

The promotion of wood for energy, combined with rising energy prices, and the expanding use of wood in sawmills, paper and panel mills, is leading to an increase in wood demand.

Bioenergy should be seen as a part of sustainable forestry. The development of the use of bioenergy from the forest should be balanced especially in the context of national biomass action plans interfacing with other national plans in the forest sector. Forest certification, chains of custody, certificates of origin together with certification of contractors are tools to guarantee forest sustainability.

Despite the efforts towards an increased wood production, the different aspects of multi-functional and sustainable forest management should be guaranteed in the forest. All future wood supplies are to be mobilised in a sustainable manner from the forest and used with best possible efficiency.

Professional foresters are key actors in the bioenergy sector

From a professional and a wood production viewpoint together with a high level of the sustainable forest management and a holistic approach the Professional Foresters are key actors in the sector.

Professional Foresters:

- **Have a wide knowledge of the sector and on a practical level they are the key actors in mobilizing additional wood quantities from the forest.**
- **Have a central role in education and training to promote cooperation around the bioenergy sector and the multifunctional use of forests.**
- **Guarantee the quality of all work done in the forest. Investment into a good working forest leads to positive results not only in rural areas but supports the overall economic, social and climatic development of the region.**
- **Play a central role in bioenergy leading to a high level of innovation, technological development and research.**

For an optimization of all aspects of modern, multi-functional forestry, qualified forest personnel in sufficient numbers is crucial.

The professional foresters, and the organisations representing them, should be involved in all processes on all levels to develop a strong and viable bioenergy sector in Europe.