

"Biomass for Energy Pact"

The promotion of renewable energy is a cornerstone in the EU's climate and energy strategy until 2020 as illustrated by the 20/20/20 targets for greenhouse gas reductions, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources contained in the Europe 2020 Strategy for growth and employment. Therefore, special concerns are being raised over the need to promote the renewable energies and to reduce our dependence on foreign suppliers.

PROFORBIOMED project "Promoting of residual forestry biomass in the Mediterranean basin" (PROFORBIOMED - 1S-MED10-009) was one of the first three strategic MED projects approved by the MED Programme's Selection Committee during its 22nd February 2011 meeting in Valencia. Its aim is to promote the use of renewable energies in the Mediterranean regions by creating an integrated strategy for the use of residual forestry biomass.

Within this project, capitalization actions are considered very important. Their aim is to ensure the sustainable development of the biomass production chain through the transnational capitalization and promotion of woody biomass, the setting up of political agreements, the identification of financing mechanisms, etc.

In this sense and within the framework of the capitalisation project activities, PROFORBIOMED partners elaborated this preliminary document which paves the way for future agreements in order to present their support on the EU policy on renewable energy, specially on biomass.

Preamble

We, the participants

of PROFORBIOMED project "Promoting of residual forestry biomass in the Mediterranean basin" (PROFORBIOMED - 1S-MED10-009) and the other signatories:

recognizing the importance of sub-national governments in addressing the most important challenges that the world faces today, such as reducing polluting and greenhouse gases emissions, increasing the use of renewable energies, in particular of bioenergy and improving the energy efficiency;

calling on the EU to support all efforts promoting a strong development of the renewable energy sector both at national and at local and regional level that will enable Member States to meet and go beyond the EU's target;

sharing the common objective to guarantee energy supply security in Europe, the reduction in energy costs for businesses and individual citizens, the promotion of innovative technologies for energy production in particular for biomass conversion ;

aware that sustainable development equally encompass economic, social and environmental dimensions, for the present and future generations, and that energy production and use must be an integral part of EU strategies for implementing sustainable development;

being aware of the need to valorise the Mediterranean forests as active sources of income that need proper management, and that promoting renewable energies will be an economic and social opportunity for rural areas;

understanding that global governance depends on cooperation among different communities that must make an effort to create and implement strategic common policies;

are strongly committed to face EU challenges by assuming key roles that support and improve governance models for energy production, use and development.

Background

The concept of energy security in Europe encompasses a wide range of issues including energy efficiency, diversification of energy supply, increased transparency of energy demand and supply offers, solidarity among the EU Member States, infrastructure and external relations.

Some of the links between the environment and the energy import dependency are determined by the fuel mix used to deliver energy services, the level of demand for those services and the speed at which these services have to be delivered. A major challenge on which Europe is heading is a very significant increase of sustainable use of biomass for energy.

- The current energy system within the EU is **heavily dependent on fossil fuels** and this tendency is going to be further enhanced, following the Fukushima accident.
- Dependency is rapidly increasing for **oil, natural gas and coal**.
- The largest single energy exporter to the EU is Russia.
- Biomass is the energy resource that receives less subventions.

But in the last years:

- **A change in the energy mix** is taking place in Europe. Renewable energy has the highest annual growth rate in total primary energy consumption.
- The switch to gas due to environmental constraints (including concerns over climate change) and a rapid increase in electricity demand brought about some **environmental benefits** (reduction of CO2 emissions) but increased dependency on gas imports.

The challenge for the 21st century is how to sustainably develop and maintain the quality of life for a growing population with higher expectations of well-being. Underlying this challenge is the need for sufficient and sustainable energy supplies to provide the economic activity underpinning these expectations.

The EU's three principal goals for energy policy are security of supply, competitiveness and environmental sustainability. The increase of European energy system's efficiency can reduce environmental effects and dependencies on fossil fuels and can contribute to limit the increase in energy costs. Whilst in recent years the efficiency in energy production has increased, the potential for further improvement is still significant, for example, through a greater use of combined heat and power and other energy related efficient technologies that are already available or close to commercialisation.

Enhancing renewable energy sources is another key factor for reaching the dual goals of security of supply and reduction in GHG and air pollution emissions. In addition, a more mature market for renewable energy technologies is expected to bring about a number of social and economic benefits, including regional and local development opportunities, export opportunities, social cohesion and employment. This is even truer for energy production from biomass, which is mainly locally produced and converted into energy, thus contributing to the establishment of a more distributed energy grid and to the development of local and regional economic activities, especially in rural areas that need it the most. Additionally, this is even far more important for Mediterranean Regions where wild fires constitute a real environmental, economic and social threat and where an improved management of forest biomass resources can minimise this potential danger.

In this sense, it is important to highlight the reasons and advantages of the use of woody biomass for energetic purposes:

- The European legal framework related to biomass energetic quota, given by Directive 28/2009/CE, 2020, is a legally binding provision.
- Biomass is a fuel that reduces the dependency on foreign energy sources which is currently in force for the EU, and therefore helps to offset the UE trade deficit.
- Biomass is a native and manageable fuel, which has no limitations based on international fuel markets fluctuations, and which does not depend on weather conditions (such as wind conditions or solar energies).
- Its local/regional characteristics place biomass within the energy market as a competitive element and shock absorber against the upward trend in oil prices, with corresponding impact on the rise in energy prices.

- Agroforestry biomass demand has a strategic role as a generator of employment in disadvantaged rural areas with scarce expectations of socioeconomic development.
- The energy demand of forest biomass contributes to the conservation and enhancement of European forests:
- The energy demand of forest biomass involves a continuous improvement of existing models of Mediterranean forests, which means:
 - A continuous decrease of forest fire danger in properly managed forests.
 - Therefore, a reduction of the EU annual budget in forest firefighting, in particular for MED areas. (ES)

Purpose

The promotion of renewable energies is a cornerstone in the EU's climate and energy strategy until 2020 as illustrated by the 20/20/20 targets contained in the Europe 2020 Strategy for growth and jobs. This is because renewables energies are considered to provide various benefits: not only do they support our environment and climate policy objectives but they also help to diversify our energy supply and reduce our dependence on foreign suppliers, reduce exposure to resulting volatility of energy prices and contribute to technology development, regional development and employment, namely in rural areas that suffer most for population migration.

The EU's Energy roadmap 2050 explores the challenges posed by pursuing the EU's decarbonisation objective while at the same time ensuring security of energy supply and competitiveness; towards this direction, Europe moves together in order to finalize a common and shared strategy that involves all countries.

This statement is the innovative preparatory document to a binding act (Energy Pact) that involves all the EU countries towards the realization of the European Energy Strategy.

The National and Regional Governments, in their strategies on environmental sustainability, economic growth and creation of employment, have recognized the need to identify energy as a priority to achieve the sustainable development of society and the good management of natural resources.

The participants acknowledge and accept their responsibility as key actors for guaranteeing the interaction among different levels of government, the civil society and the private sector are interested in creating a thematic Network on

governance models for the achievement of EU's energy objectives, specifically promoting the use of biomass as a renewable energy source .

Establishing a fruitful collaboration among the EU Governments leads

- To exploit the existing or planned tools for a sustainable use and production of energy in particular from biomass;
- To consider the multiple ways to produce energy in particular from biomass and to hold stakeholders talks;
- To develop a series of adequate scientific and technical tools (such as models, decision support systems etc.) to support the process of knowledge sharing and improvement to support decision makers;
- To develop an efficient communication and awareness-raising campaign aimed at reducing fuel and energy consumption and importation by acting on individuals, community or companies energy footprint .

We agree:

- To carry on this transnational cooperative effort in order to analyze traded policies and instruments on energy use and production, pursuing sustainable development of the resources, allowing the improvement of stakeholders' satisfaction and protecting the quality of the ecosystems involved.
- To consider the multiple ways of producing energy, in particular from renewable sources and to hold stakeholders talks.

Objectives

In order to achieve their purposes, participants give a special attention to the management and use of biomass as a strategic resource to produce renewable energy and agree to focus their cooperation around the following objectives:

- To raise awareness and enhance debate on the environmental priority of energy resources and their management.
- To identify strategies to limit the impact of the heating and cooling systems, in terms of efficiency improvement and reduction of energy consumption. To raise awareness, at different levels, about the relevance of District Heating and Cooling systems, through collaboration between public and private partnerships, to supply energy firstly to public buildings in order to make this kind of investments profitable.
- To create, facilitate and disseminate new tools for the good governance in Europe at different levels, with respect to energy management, adaptation to climate changes and mitigation, with special focus on forest management and

forest biomass use for energy, as well as indicators for evaluating and monitoring its usefulness;

- To ease the collaboration and the knowledge transfer between stakeholders in order to facilitate the creation of clusters or other collaborative figures and activate investments in the fields of biomass energy production.
- To promote development of new policies and regulatory systems of energy use at regional, national and EU level. To obtain European and National support for the promotion of platforms, installations, facilities, etc. which can increase demand for forest biomass use and improve the efficiency of forest biomass supply chains.

Actions

In order to follow up the above mentioned objectives, participants have reached consensus on carrying on joint work and exchanges through the following cooperation tools:

- Organize training and dissemination activities such as workshops, conferences, exhibitions, joint training programmes, etc. for raising awareness and knowledge transfer about bioenergy.
- Promotion of policy and position papers in order to influence mainstreaming policies with impact on forest management and bioenergy.
- Elaboration of joint technical reports to be disseminated through the existing networks.
- To support the providing of grants/aids to Renewable Energies, specifically to biomass, such as:
 - Reductions in local taxes for biomass heating systems, due to the indirect benefits that biomass provide
 - Grants to cover the cost difference between a fossil fuel boiler and a biomass one.
 - Specific tax reductions or subsidies for those silvicultural operations related to extraction, transformation and transport of biomass.
- To support the introduction on taxes on CO₂ emissions generated by any type of fossil fuel energies.
- To facilitate the access to the European Energy Efficiency Funds for larger public or private investments aimed at biomass heating production.

- To support funding for biomass heating systems through specific funds from the European Investment Bank (EIB).
- To encourage supply contracts between public or private owners and investment companies. The aim is to ensure the consumption requirements of biomass power plants for an adequate period, providing access to long-term funding investors.
- Examine the potential of establishing a specific Working Group (WG) to be maintained even after the end of the project. The timing and patterns of work of the WG will be defined in a specific document.

Conclusions

The assessment of experiences carried out by organisations from different countries participating in PROFORBIOMED aims at opening a permanent discussion channel on the sustainable energy use and production from biomass. This channel will help to achieve the energy policy objectives able to bring together conflicting targets of (ecological, economic and ethical) sustainability. The establishment of a permanent network which will focus on the strategic theme of production and use of energy from biomass, developed within the PROFORBIOMED project, will act as a tool to promote the launch of several initiatives as research and cooperation projects, technical documents, joint conferences, scientists and policy makers networks.