

Fuels and energy from renewable sources: transition to biofuels to deliver greenhouse gas savings

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This report provides the latest insights into progress made up to 2017 towards the 20% target for renewable energy in 2020 and addresses other European Commission reporting obligations under RED I and the Directive on Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC).

The report also includes an overview of the potential in terms of co-operation mechanisms and assessments of the administrative frameworks and biofuels sustainability.

Renewable energy: progress in the EU-28

The report noted that in 2017, the EU reached a share of 17.52% of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption, against a target of 20% for 2020, and above the indicative trajectory of 16% for 2017/2018. In addition, the EU as a whole is also above the slightly more ambitious trajectory defined by Member States themselves in their National Renewable Energy Action Plans (NREAPs). The EU is on track to reach its 2020 target.

In order to assess the feasibility of 2020 target achievement, a modelling exercise has been carried out for the Commission. This modelling finds that a renewable energy share of 18.1% to 20.7% can be expected for 2020 at EU level with currently implemented and planned renewable energy policy initiatives.

While the EU is still on track to meet its renewable energy 2020 targets, efforts should be stepped up in the remaining period until 2020 to ensure this is the case, also in connection with expected higher energy consumption in the future.

Sustainability of biofuel

The report noted that in 2016, the EU consumption of sustainable biofuels amounted to 13 840 ktoe. Of this, 11 083 ktoe (80%) was biodiesel and 2620 ktoe (19%) was bioethanol. It is estimated that 4.9 Mha of land was required for the production of crops for EU biofuel consumption in 2016, based on an analysis of the origin of biofuels feedstock. Of that amount, 3.6 Mha (73%) is located within the EU and the remaining 1.3 Mha (26%) is located in third countries.

Voluntary schemes recognised by the European Commission

According to the report, the EU sustainability criteria have been successful in minimising the risk of major direct environmental impacts associated to biofuels, irrespective of whether they are produced domestically, or imported from third countries. Voluntary schemes recognised by the European Commission have become the main tool to demonstrate compliance with the EU biofuel sustainability criteria, and therefore they have been subject to increased public scrutiny. Currently, 14 voluntary schemes have been recognised for this purpose.

During the calendar year 2017, 21 429 kilotons (kt) of liquid biofuels (including pure vegetable oil), 140 045 thousand m³ of biomethane (equivalent to around 100.8 kt), and 119 119 kt of feedstock have been certified to comply with the EU sustainability criteria as set out in the Renewable Energy Directive.

In addition, [Directive \(EU\) 2018/2001](#) on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (RED II) includes a reinforced sustainability framework for all bioenergy uses (not limited to biofuels, but covering also biomass and biogas use in heat and power), including a new approach limiting the role of high ILUC-risk biofuels. The governance of the voluntary schemes has been strengthened, including the robustness of third party auditing.