

# Energy policy: renewable sources, biomass action plan

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The Council welcomed the Commission Communication on a Biomass Action Plan and the Commission Communication on an EU Strategy for Biofuels. In its conclusions, the Council underlined that the use of biomass as an energy source should be increased. It is convinced that an increased use of biomass can contribute to the three main objectives of energy policy (enhancing security of supply, enhancing competitiveness and promoting environmental sustainability).

The Council underlines the following **general principles** with respect to the definition of a biomass policy: a) an integrated approach should be followed which takes account of sustainability, the impact on growth and jobs as well as environmental issues including biodiversity conservation and life cycle analysis as far as possible, in close cooperation with all relevant sectors including agriculture, forestry and waste management and addressing socio-economic, fiscal, trade and industrial policy questions; b) the principle of subsidiarity should be respected, giving flexibility to Member States to develop their own specific policy approach and determine individual goals; choose the type(s) of biomass and energy crops and the sectors in which biomass is used; decide on the instruments for the promotion of bioenergy and on the instruments to achieve cost-effectiveness; choose the tools for achieving the objectives of the Directive on electricity from renewable energy sources; c) cost-efficiency should be an important guiding principle, at national and at EU level, for an ecologically rational promotion of bioenergy, built upon an economically sustainable, long-term financial basis while maximising environmental benefits; d) a balance should be sought between energy uses of biomass, non-energy uses of biomass and nature conservation, taking also national economic circumstances into account; e) a balanced approach regarding domestic production and imports of biomass should be found; f) the impact of relevant existing legislation in the energy sector should be assessed before revising such legislation; this requirement should not be seen as an obstacle to new legislative proposals.

**The following issues should be addressed as priority:**

- research, development and demonstration on biomass, regarding new and efficient technologies for generation and use of renewable fuels, including raw materials. This concerns in particular second-generation biofuels, bio-refineries, efficient boiler technologies, the impact of biomass fuel emissions on air pollution and market introduction aspects;
- promoting the creation of well functioning, transparent and open markets for biomass at regional, EU- and global level as appropriate, taking into account environmental sustainability;
- the removal of technical and non-technical (including administrative) barriers at EU and at national level;
- information campaigns targeted at farmers, forest owners, local authorities, the energy sector and consumers;
- increasing the use of biomass including waste for heating and cooling purposes, in particular for cogeneration and district heating;
- adoption of technical standards for biofuels, as well as a revision of the fuel quality Directive to allow higher blends of biofuels in petrol and diesel.

**Member States are urged to:**

- link support to the achievement of high energy efficiency levels and tangible, cost-effective benefits for the environment and security of supply;

- achieve the already established indicative national targets for biofuels;
- create a favourable regulatory environment for investments in biomass production and the appropriate equipment and provide medium- to long-term stability and transparency for investors, also with regard to appropriate support schemes if a Member State chooses to have such a scheme.

**The Commission is invited to:**

- take account of the abovementioned priorities;
- initiate shortly a discussion about the sustainability of biomass - including by comparing different types of biomass - and to provide information about the compatibility of minimum sustainability standards for bioenergy with the Community acquis in relevant policy areas;
- provide information about all costs and benefits of the promotion of biomass production within the EU;
- bring forward proposals to encourage the cost-efficient and sustainable use of biomass for heating and cooling;
- establish efficiency and emission criteria for biomass installations, using inter alia the Eco-Design Directive, in particular for household biomass boilers;
- in its ongoing review of the waste framework legislation, facilitate and further encourage the use of biomass and clean waste as fuel; review the animal by-products legislation with a view to encouraging the use of farming and food processing by-products as a renewable energy source. Such encouragement should however take into account other worthwhile uses of waste and animal by-products, including traditional uses;
- revise the vehicle emission testing procedure in order to take into account the use of biofuels as reference fuels for testing biofuel-powered vehicles;
- simplify administrative procedures for the production and use of bio-energies in the context of the CAP and assess the extension of the application of the Energy Crops Scheme to all Member States;
- explore the issue of simple and cost-effective measures to guarantee that biofuels are produced in a sustainable way, inter alia certification, in respect of environmental, social and technical standards, and applying to internal production as well as imported biofuels.

Member States are called upon to develop or update National Biomass Action Plans in response to the present conclusions. The Commission, on the other hand, is called upon to carry out an assessment of the implementation of relevant Community legislation in the Member States and of the actions undertaken as follow-up to these conclusions, including in the light of their contribution to the achievement of the three main objectives of European energy policy, and report to the Council by the end of 2008.