Energy policy: renewable sources, biomass action plan

2006/2082(INI) - 14/12/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Werner **LANGEN** (PPE-DE, D), welcoming the two Commission communications on the biomass action plan and on an EU strategy for biofuels. It was convinced that the EU strategy for promoting biofuels, particularly against the background of the Lisbon Strategy, must be guided by efficiency and sustainability and that measures must not be allowed to generate a disproportionately high level of administrative expenditure. There was a need to create at regional, national and European level transparent and open markets for biomass and biofuels which met sustainable production standards. These markets should be integrated into the system of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and be compatible with a single, transparent and competitive energy market.

Parliament felt that the Commission should reconsider all action plans and directives with a view to permitting the rational production and use of bioenergy and biofuels and that this should be done principally in the fields of plant production, forestry and waste management. It urged support for the cost-effective and sustainable production of biomass in the areas of electricity generation, methane production, transport and heating and cooling. However, aid and assistance in connection with biomass-based renewable energies should not distort competition on raw material markets in the long term. Whilst wood biomass was particularly suitable for developing markets operating on a Europe-wide basis, Parliament considered that the use of forest biomass must not lead to increased pressure on natural forests, halt the recovery of historically over-exploited forests or lead to expansion in monocultures or exotic species plantations and must always be promoted in ways that were compatible with improving the ecological quality of forests.

Parliament called on the Commission to develop a tool which can assess the sustainability of production and use of (bio) fuels. It felt that second-generation biofuels (BTL fuels) had a much higher energy use potential than first-generation biofuels. In addition, given the conflicting demands on biomass from waste, it was important that bio-energy should not be used as an excuse to promote waste incineration over more resource-saving options such as reuse, recycling or composting. Parliament asked the Commission to eliminate any obstacles based on European legislation so as to render possible and to promote the fermentation of manure or organic waste to produce biogas.

Parliament went on to call for the definition of different types of second generation biofuels in order to distinguish, given the impacts on the environment, between sylviculture products and products derived from lignocellulosic waste materials, landfill organic waste and raw materials of animal and vegetable origin. It recognised that further increasing palm oil production might affect natural forests and traditional food production, causing bio-diversity loss, land disputes and significant releases of greenhouse gases. The Commission was asked to subject the importation of palm oil-based products into the EU to compliance with sustainable production criteria, defined within a comprehensive certification scheme.

Member States were expected to come up with investment incentives for the production and use of biomass and biofuels that were the most efficient from a climatic point of view and compatible with structural and agricultural policy rules. Such incentive schemes must under no circumstances lead to the replacement of sustainable local food production.

Lastly, Parliament was convinced that public support for biofuels was essential. It noted the widespread public anxiety about green genetic engineering. The development of energy-intensive biomass must be

environmentally safe and must not create a real or perceived threat to non-GM food production. Marked Assisted Selection (MAS), which allows the improvement of crops, through 'smart breeding', i.e. the crossing of plants of similar families rather than their genetic modification through the integration of alien genes, must provide a major contribution to the development of energy-intensive and at the same time environmentally safe biomass.