

# Highlights CT4

## Biomass mobilisation and sustainability

2<sup>nd</sup> CA-RES IV Plenary Meeting

18th-19th May 2022

### Session 5: Availability of sustainable forest biomass

This session focused on the potential impacts of EU forest-related policies on the mobilisation of forest biomass for bioenergy purposes. In the first part of the session, DG-ENER presented the proposals for revision of REDII concerning bioenergy as well as a state-of-play of the REDII implementation (implementing regulation and transposition checks).

MS addressed many questions to the Commission regarding the practical implementation of the RED II criteria for forest biomass and are still waiting for the implementing regulation providing operational guidance to MS for forest biomass. MS are also concerned about the relatively low number of VS covering forest biomass. MS also addressed several questions via the questionnaire regarding the practical implementation of RED II criteria on forest biomass (risk-based approaches, group auditing,...) and expressed the need to continue exchange of information and best practices between MS on this topic.

DG-AGRI presented the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030, which promotes the multi-functional role of forests. Some MS have raised the risk that new barriers will emerge that will reduce the use of wood-based resources for sustainable bioenergy purposes and call for better integration of all bioenergy stakeholders in the implementation process.

DG-ENV presented the proposal for a regulation on deforestation-free products. The six commodities covered by the regulation are palm oil, beef, soy, coffee, cocoa, and wood. The new regulation will guarantee that the listed product available on the EU market do not contribute to global deforestation and forest degradation.

Some MS stressed the need to strengthen synergies with the REDII sustainability criteria in order to avoid duplication of requirements and procedures.

In the second part of the session, JRC presented the results of a recent study on the use of woody biomass for energy production in the EU and its potential impacts on biodiversity and climate change. The called for improved availability and quality of data to accurately assess the sustainability of woody biomass uses. The energy sector is the largest user of EU internal wood processing by-products. Industrial by-products and recovered wood can be expected to satisfy an increased demand from the energy sector only partially, given that these sources are also used in wood products manufacturing. The qualitative assessment of the JRC shows that there are win-win management practices options, which contribute positively to both biodiversity and climate change. Some MS called for the inclusion in future analysis of additional management practices such as those adapted to fire-prone areas.

## Session 11: Sustainable biogas production

This session focused on the promotion of sustainable biogas/biomethane production and on sustainability, certification, and traceability aspects of the biogas/biomethane value chain. The results of the questionnaire revealed interesting policy developments in several MS, such as the implementation of new support schemes, a blending obligation of renewable gas for the gas grid or a renewable gas quota obligation for suppliers. National strategies are still mainly based on anaerobic digestion, but gasification is now seen in two MS as an opportunity to meet the 2030 targets. The questions concerning the GHG emissions saving were answered in a wide variety of ways, indicating that further guidance is still needed.

DG-ENER presented the promotion of biogas/biomethane under the REDII and the RePowerEU Action Plan, and EBA reflected on these plans. The biomethane target of 35 bcm by 2030 seems ambitious but achievable by using only sustainable feedstocks like manure, agricultural residues, industrial wastewater, and food waste. Also, a large contribution is foreseen for sequential crops but there are still several issues that needs clarification and harmonization. The action plan covers six pillars. The focus is on upgrading of biogas to biomethane and grid injection, this requires the regional assessment of network development and matching it with the potential of biomethane production. The action plan also covers issues like financial instruments for risk mitigation, R&D gaps, creating industrial partnerships, speeding up permitting and standardization.

DG-ENER also presented the sustainability performances of biogas pathways under REDII. The potential of sequential crops, without the need for additional land use, was highlighted. A current review of Annex IX part A is expected to broaden the scope and the update of Annexes V/VI will provide an opportunity to add new pathways for biomethane production with more feedstocks and more technological options.

In addition, for harmonization purposes, the BioGrace tool is likely to be updated by the EC and made publicly available on the EC website. Traceability issues are expected to be improved through the Union Database, which will play an important role in supporting cross-border trade and preventing double counting. The database implements the mass balancing system throughout the interconnected European grid and will cover all types of end-users.

This session showed that there is a need for clarification and harmonization on several issues (GHG emission reduction methodology and default values, traceability, cross-border trade, state aid and accounting up to the point of consumption and mitigating the risk of double counting, etc.). The proposal to organise a task force on these biomethane issues was welcomed.