



PRESS RELEASE

Mobilisation of woody biomass for energy and industrial use – Smart logistics for forest residues, prunings and dedicated plantations

Showcasing the results of three EU-funded projects in Rome on 19 May 2015

INFRES, LogistEC and EuroPruning project organised workshop on 19 May 2015 in Rome, in FAO Headquarters to showcase the key results of these projects. Projects are supported by European Commission by €10 million. Mr Rojas-Briales, Assistant director General Forestry Department of FAO opened the workshop highlighting the importance of the wood energy in the world. The sustainable use of wood pellets and wood chips for power generation and availability of woody biomass for industrial use especially for bioeconomy it is important.

Biomass feedstock can utilised more intensively to meet EU targets

Biomass could account for two-thirds of the targeted European Union renewable energy production in 2020 (20% share in the energy mix). For this to become reality biomass use will roughly have to double between 2010 and 2020. Forests can be used more intensively to produce the required biomass, whereas the agricultural sector is another key source to expand biomass supply sustainably. Purposely grown energy crops can also contribute substantially. Improved logistics to harvest, store and transport biomass feedstocks will help create a market for biomass feedstocks such as forestry residues, agricultural wood prunings, and energy crops.

European research for new innovations for biomass supply

Since mid-2012, more than 60 organisations and companies, including many small and medium sized enterprises, collaborate in three EU-supported research projects INFRES, LogistEC and EuroPruning to develop such smart logistics. They field-demonstrate practical solutions implemented in rural communities to harvest, store and transport lignocellulosic biomass for the production of bioenergy and biomaterials. Besides developing technologies and adapting machines, the projects also assess the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the proposed supply chains, as well as the barriers to innovation.

Showcasing key results of smart logistics for forest residues, pruning and dedicated plantations

The projects organised a conference in Rome to communicate key results and discuss their wider implications for improved biomass mobilisation. Through oral, flash and poster presentations and networking some 165 participants from around the world familiarised themselves with key findings, their novelty and the implications on resource mobilisation. Conference sessions addressed (a) Best available and future technologies for biomass supply; (b) Technology, raw materials and economy of the entire biomass supply chain and (c) Economic, environmental and social sustainability of biomass production. The opening and closing sessions served to highlight the context of these research topics, and covered the Role of bioenergy in EU and globally and the perspectives beyond Europe.

Policies to support biomass mobilization

The cost of raw material is often 40-60% of total cost of the end product in bioenergy production. This means that development of biomass supply technologies and logistics should have an essential role in the renewable energy policy. In addition, transfer of technology and best practises among member countries speeds up the adoption of innovations and creates cost competitiveness against non-renewable materials and energy resources.

In the final discussion following issues were also emphasized: IT systems have a vital role to support the planning and management of operations and to use the harvesting and transport fleet optimally. Biomass has a very low energy content and its handling costs can be reduced also by densification of biomass. In the global scale,

biomass as a energy source has a low status. In addition to technological aspects, we must show efficiency and sustainability and consider the social aspects. This can be improved by introducing modern biomass based energy systems and by modernizing the biomass use for energy.

Broad international support

Besides the financial support from the EU, the conference profited from the collaboration with, and assistance of, a wide range of leading international biomass mobilization stakeholders. First and foremost of these, FAO (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) kindly hosted the conference in Rome. Invaluable help was also received from a range of other supporting organisations, including:

- International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO)
- IEA Bioenergy Agreement Task 43 - Biomass feedstocks
- US Department of Agriculture / US Forest Service, USA
- European Biomass Association (AEBIOM)
- European Biomass Industry Association (EUBIA)
- Italian Biomass Association (ITABIA)
- Italian Federation of Agricultural Machinery Manufacturers (Federunacoma)

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Further details on the conference are available at <http://www.infres.eu/en/final-conference/>