

DECC's revised biomass sustainability criteria misleading and meaningless.

- for immediate release-

The Department of Energy and Climate Change has announced today its revised sustainability criteria for the ballooning biomass electricity generating industry¹.

Requiring carbon savings is meaningless if most of the carbon emissions from biomass are ignored.

DECC are developing a carbon calculator that assesses the real impacts of biomass² but will ignore it until 2020.

The criteria include 'land use change' emissions but specifically exclude 'indirect land use change' and 'substitution' emissions where biomass is burned which could have been used to replace other materials. These are very significant sources of emissions from biomass.

The European Environment Agency Scientific Committee³ and the EU's Joint Research Centre⁴ have both said that biomass releases more greenhouse gases in the short term (up to 500 years!) at a time when we need to be drastically reducing our emissions to avoid catastrophic climate change. This 'carbon debt' is ignored in the criteria.

DECC will rely on sustainability certification from a number of dubious schemes which Biofuelwatch have shown have certified extermination of wildlife, clear-cutting of old-growth forests and evictions of thousands of people for new plantations as sustainable⁵. They also use greenhouse gas calculation tools that are deeply flawed such as the Ofgem carbon calculator.

Many generators claim carbon savings of 70% based on using forestry wastes and 'arisings' but are actually using 'roundwood'. There is simply not enough forestry waste to supply the planned growth in demand from this industry. There is evidence of whole trees⁶ (which have a much higher carbon impact) and bio-diverse old-growth forest⁷ being used for UK energy generation. Globally forest cover is reducing⁸.

Duncan Law of Biofuelwatch said: "*DECC is more concerned with 'keeping the lights on' using existing technology than with real carbon savings and environmental impact. It is heavily lobbied by the energy companies who stand to make hundreds of millions in subsidies from burning hundreds of millions of tonnes of imported wood.*"

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[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/231102/RO Biomass Sustainability consultation - Government Response 22 August 2013.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/231102/RO_Biomass_Sustainability_consultation_-_Government_Response_22_August_2013.pdf)

2 http://www.foe.co.uk/news/this_changes_everything_39485.html

3 <http://www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/governance/scientific-committee/sc-opinions/opinions-on-scientific-issues/sc-opinion-on-greenhouse-gas>

4 <http://www.euractiv.com/climate-environment/eu-bioenergy-policies-increase-c-news-515606>

5 http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2012/biomass_myth_report/

6 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-22630815>

7 <http://www.dogwoodalliance.org/2012/11/new-report-discredits-uk-energy-company-claims-that-pellets-come-from-wood-waste/>

8 http://news.mongabay.com/2010/0427-hance_forestloss.html

Notes for Editors