

EDSP ECO

Contribution for the PBL's research into the availability of sustainable biomass and its application possibilities in the Netherlands.



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EDSP ECO is a research and project agency and creates an environment to support organizations worldwide that are responsible for actions to protect the planet, end poverty or increase well-being. We provide support in the form of building and managing websites, conducting extensive research, setting up and offering digital campaigns, connecting stakeholders, giving public speeches and interviews and developing and deploying environmentally friendly solutions. In addition, we actively focus on politicians and companies that contribute to pollution and climate change.

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Introduction

In the climate agreement, the Dutch government wrongly foresees an indispensable role for biomass in the energy transition for making our economy more sustainable and realizing the climate task. There is a lot of debate and concern whether the billions of euros that are now being subsidized for burning trees would be better spent on truly sustainable solutions. In addition, a large part of the Dutch population is seriously concerned about the harmful consequences of deforestation and the burning of woody biomass for health, nature, the climate and thus our future.

At the request of the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) has started a comprehensive study on the availability of biomass, and on applications within the Netherlands, and has been supported in this by MSG strategies, De Gemeent, CE-Delft and Royal HaskoningDHV. Science is human work and many things can go wrong in the production and application of science. Partly in response to parliamentary questions, in 2005 the Minister of Education, Culture and Science asked the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences (KNAW) to advise her on [safeguarding the scientific independence of research](#) which is carried out by researchers in the public sector on behalf of third parties.

The KNAW found that clients often live in worlds with objectives and values and norms (business, politics, interest groups, etc.) that are very different from those that researchers and science should use. The pressure to let their own objectives predominate can be high with clients, which in unfavorable cases can translate into pressure on the researchers. Publications and informal conversations suggested that derailments occurred. However, the KNAW's recommendations to prevent the design, implementation, interpretation and publication of the research from being improperly influenced by the interests of the client during independent research have not been followed, with disastrous consequences. Follow The Money (FTM) has published this [23 articles on this matter in the last 5 years.](#)

EDSP ECO Foundation is committed to protecting science and society from bad or deliberately misleading products that are brought to the public as products of good scientific research and has [done extensive research](#) to the paid pro-biomass lobby in the Netherlands. Several Dutch universities, research agencies and companies are involved, including MSG strategies, De Gemeent, CE-Delft and Royal HaskoningDHV. We provided our findings as input for the research by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), which serves as the basis for the advice of the Social and Economic Council (SER) with regard to the use of biomass for energy generation in the Netherlands.

Documents submitted for the PBL investigation

We are submitting 20 documents for the PBL research, including the document you are currently reading. All documents have been compressed and made available online using the following link: [2020-03-16-edsp-eco-input-for-the-gov-nl-pbl-research-on-the-availability-of-sustainable-biomass-and-usage-in-the-netherlands-english.zip](https://www.pbl.nl/documenten/2020-03-16-edsp-eco-input-for-the-gov-nl-pbl-research-on-the-availability-of-sustainable-biomass-and-usage-in-the-netherlands-english.zip)

Research methods for the 20 documents

During our extensive research into the paid pro-biomass lobby in the Netherlands and the harmful effects of burning woody biomass on health, nature, the climate and thus our future, we analyzed [more than 1200 documents](#) and research reports and we have started to collect the most important aspects (summaries, quotes, findings, etc.) per subject. In addition to hundreds of documents, we have also collected over 1700 news reports and 25 videos that were published over the past 20 years:

[25-videos-used-as-input-for-the-gov-nl-pbl-research-on-the-availability-of-sustainable-biomass-and-usage-in-the-netherlands-english.pdf](#)

[1200-documents-used-as-input-for-the-gov-nl-pbl-research-on-the-availability-of-sustainable-biomass-and-usage-in-the-netherlands-english.pdf](#)

[1700-news-items-used-as-input-for-the-gov-nl-pbl-research-on-the-availability-of-sustainable-biomass-and-usage-in-the-netherlands-english.pdf](#)

Research into the harmful consequences of burning woody biomass

We have analyzed, elaborated and made available 50 summary documents and research reports from 2019 for each topic:

[climate-solutions-for-reducing-co2-emissions-and-sustainable-energy-generation-without-woody-biomass-english.pdf](#)

[2019-research-on-claims-whole-trees-are-used-to-produce-woody-biomass-for-energy-production-english.pdf](#)

[2019-research-on-the-sustainability-criteria-for-the-logging-and-burning-of-woody-biomass-english.pdf](#)

[2019-research-on-the-subsidies-for-the-logging-and-burning-of-woody-biomass-english.pdf](#)

[2019-research-on-the-lulucf-criteria-for-the-logging-and-burning-of-woody-biomass-english.pdf](#)

[2019-research-on-the-paid-lobbyfacts-for-the-logging-and-burning-of-woody-biomass-english.pdf](#)

[2019-research-on-the-laws-and-regulations-for-the-logging-and-burning-of-woody-biomass-english.pdf](#)

[2019-research-on-the-health-risks-caused-by-the-logging-and-burning-of-woody-biomass-english.pdf](#)

[2019-research-on-the-ecotoxicity-of-burning-woody-biomass-english.pdf](#)

[2019-research-on-the-certifications-required-for-sustainable-logging-and-burning-of-woody-biomass-english.pdf](#)

[2019-research-on-the-impact-of-logging-and-burning-of-woody-biomass-on-carbon-dioxide-emission-levels-english.pdf](#)

[2019-research-on-the-impact-of-logging-and-burning-of-woody-biomass-on-biodiversity-english.pdf](#)

[2019-research-on-the-availability-of-woody-biomass-english.pdf](#)

In the coming months we will also develop and add documents and research reports from previous years. We have created a research page for each subject. The following web links refer to the research pages per subject: [Availability](#), [Biodiversity](#), [Carbon dioxide](#), [Certification](#), [Ecotoxicity](#), [Health Risks](#), [Legal](#), [Lobby Facts](#), [LULUCF](#), [Solutions](#), [Subsidies](#), [Sustainability](#), [Whole trees](#)

Research into the paid pro-biomass lobby

This research is part of an extensive study into the paid pro-biomass lobby activities in the Netherlands. The full study consists of the following 6 parts which will be published on the following website: www.biomassmurder.org/research/lobby-facts

Part 1: [Energy companies](#)

Part 2: [Politics and civil servants](#)

Part 3: [Scientists](#)

Part 4: [Consultants en lobbyists](#)

Part 5: [Certification en subsidies](#)

Part 6: [Banks and investors](#)

On this subject we have provided three documents as input for the PBL research. This concerns the research report part 1 (the energy companies) and 3 (the scientists) and the document with the top 400 people involved in the paid pro-biomass lobby:

[biomass-lobbyfacts-research-part-1-the-energy-companies-english.pdf](#)

[biomass-lobbyfacts-research-part-3-rwe-essent-and-the-scientists-of-the-copernicus-institute-english.pdf](#)

[list-of-top-400-people-involved-in-the-paid-pro-biomass-lobby-in-the-netherlands-submitted-as-contribution-for-the-pbl-research-on-biomass-english.pdf](#)

Parts 2 and 4 of the research into the paid pro-biomass lobby are almost ready to be published and are awaiting the advice of the PBL and the input of the four organizations involved in the research (MSG strategies, De Gemeent , CE-Delft and Royal HaskoningDHV).

Parties involved in the PBL Research

In recent years, the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) has been extensively involved in the various studies that were commissioned by the State into the sustainability and employability of woody biomass and the resulting advice. We found that more than 25 (former) employees of the PBL are involved in the paid pro-biomass lobby activities with regard to determining the current and future biomass policy. The current project management of PBL's research also belongs to that category. The four organizations involved in PBL research are also all involved in the paid pro-biomass lobby, and three out of four are responsible for current disastrous biomass policies. The four organizations are extensively involved in part 4 of our research into the paid pro-biomass lobby in the Netherlands: [Consultants and lobbyists](#). Below we have given a brief summary showing that the four parties are involved in the paid pro-biomass lobby and therefore cannot make an impartial contribution to the research and advice.

The Gemeent

The Gemeent consists of 6 members whose companies are partners of the organization. Three of the six members are involved in our paid pro-biomass lobby research and 1 of them is the former director of CE-Delft Jan Paul van Soest, who was involved in a lobby scandal in 2006 together with the [co-founder of CE-Delft](#). NRC reported that they would receive an amount of 1.7 million from the energy companies Nuon, Essent and Delta. As a result, [Jan Paul van Soest resigned from his position as chairman of the paid pro-biomass lobby organization](#) “de Bezienningsgroep Energie”. However, that was not the end of it. Jan Paul van Soest, in personal collaboration with the paid pro-biomass lobby organization CE-Delft, has published more than a dozen paid pro-biomass lobby reports through his cooperative The Gemeent. His organization frequently cooperates with the other paid pro-biomass

lobby organizations in the Netherlands, he is responsible for the current biomass policy and has financial interests to maintain the current policy.

CE-Delft

Research agency CE-Delft is a leader in producing pro-biomass lobby reports with an average of 1 paid pro-biomass report per month for the past 20 years. Below we have provided a link to an archive of more than 260 pro-biomass reports of CE-Delft, which have been commissioned and published by the Dutch Banking Association, BECO, the Dutch Petroleum Industry Association, Electrabel (ENGIE), Shell, Cogen, the Energy Reflection Group, Unilever Biofuels, Tennet, Royal HaskoningDHV, European Fuel Association, ETBE, The Dutch Association for Energy Companies, Qlyte Subcoal, RWE, Essent, Hivos, GasTerra, Vattenfall, Association of Dutch Wood Companies, Uniper, Deltalinqs, Akzo, DSM, Alliander, Nuon, and the paid pro-biomass lobby of the NVDE: [cedelft-paid-pro-biomass-lobby-archive-of-hundreds-paid-pro-biomass-reports-published-by-cedelft-the-last-20-years-dutch.zip](#) The majority of the reports were written by a selected group of people from CE-Delft who stand out in our pro-biomass lobby research, including Frans Rooijers, the successor to the previous CE-Delft director Jan Paul van Soest. [In the corporate biography of CE-Delft from 2008](#) Jan Paul van Soest explains how CE-Delft ended up in the paid pro-biomass lobby. We have added the link to the summary about this below: [2008-09-00-cedelft-paid-pro-biomass-lobby-a-history-of-cedelft-summary-dutch.pdf](#)

The short version of his story is:

I had to fire 1/5 of the staff of CE-Delft, nevertheless we still could not pay the bills, I could not sleep, then accepted that I paid pro-biomass reports with my company started publishing and the day after the first assignment from Shell was on the doormat, after that things went better financially with CE-Delft, Frans Rooijers and my colleagues wanted even more and I had to step down as director but was still occasionally hired for a paid pro-biomass report via the Gemeeynt.

In 2014, CE-Delft and director Frans Rooijers were also extensively involved in a study on the sustainability and use of woody biomass on behalf of the SER. Ed Nijpels (who appears in part 2 in our pro-biomass lobby research: [Politics and civil servants](#)) at the time was the chairman of the “Commission for the Guarantee of the Energy Agreement for Sustainable Growth” and [reported the Minister of Economic Affairs as follows:](#)

A working group led by ir. F.J. Rooijers, director of CE Delft, has taken important steps until the summer. The last points were discussed in a tripartite meeting between representatives of Energie Nederland, the environmental organizations and central government; I deeply appreciate the efforts made by the parties to reach an agreement in good consultation. They have succeeded in this by far on most points. For example, energy companies and environmental organizations have agreed on the elaboration of the sustainability requirements that must be set for biomass that is used for co-firing in Dutch coal-fired power stations. The parties have also agreed on the method of certification to demonstrate that the biomass meets the aforementioned criteria. This applies to biomass from forests in the Netherlands and to biomass from forests in other parts of the world, such as North America. The parties share the aim to achieve 100% certification of biomass at area level as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, even then these efforts were of no use and six years later we are still at the point where industry states that burning woody biomass is good for the climate and that they are entitled to subsidies. They show politicians and citizens a self-invented certification for sustainable woody biomass that is not monitored by the government and about which it has been reported extensively in recent decades (including by an independent EU working group) that whole trees are indeed cut from hardwood are obtained from non-certified forests for the production of woody biomass for the power stations of, among others, RWE / Essent.

Our conclusion based on extensive research is that the current mismanagement is caused by companies such as CE-Delft, the Gemeynt, Ecofys / Navigant, Royal HaskoningDHV, the NVDE but also, for example, the Copernicus Institute of the UU (on behalf of the RWE/ Essent) claim to provide independent advice while systematically promoting their own financial interests.

Our extensive analysis of the paid pro-biomass lobby reports from CE-Delft shows, among other things, that the data with which they calculate the difference between the emissions released during the burning of biomass and, for example, coal and gas, deviate from their earlier reports published in the past two decades and more recent reports and, for example, reports recently published by DNV-GL (former KEMA). We had those findings checked by several experts and they confirmed our conclusions.

[Reports by CE-Delft from 2013 and 2104](#) confirm the claims of the hundreds of scientists who have spoken out against burning woody biomass. They show that it can take up to 100 years for the CO₂ released when burning woody biomass to be reabsorbed by a new tree:

The use of biomass, provided that it meets sustainability criteria, fits the definition of climate neutrality because the CO₂ that is released when biomass is burnt is "short-cycle". This means that during the growth of the biomass, this CO₂ is extracted from the atmosphere, on a time scale of 100 years or less.

Royal HaskoningDHV

In the middle of last year, the most important paid pro-biomass lobbyist from CE-Delft (Harry Croezen) changed employer after 26 years of loyal service and joined Royal HaskoningDHV as a paid pro-biomass lobbyist. The time coincided exactly with the assignment of the PBL to CE-Delft and Royal HaskoningDHV to provide the technical support to their research regarding the use and sustainability of woody biomass as the basis for the SER advice. At the beginning of 2020, Harry Croezen published a paid pro-biomass lobby report via Royal HaskoningDHV on behalf of the paid pro-biomass lobby organization, in which he stated that burning woody biomass released considerably less CO₂ emissions than burning imported gas. The Federation against Biomass Power Plants has reported to Royal HaskoningDHV that the statements made in the report do not correspond to reality. Royal HaskoningDHV could only confirm that the conclusions of the report would have been different if the emissions from the burning of woody biomass were actually included in the calculation:

Within the assignment, as you yourself observed, we have applied the currently applicable and usual calculation methods for determining the chain emissions. That was the scope of the assignment. The emissions from the combustion of biomass are then not included (..) The

composition of biomass, natural gas and simple chemistry then shows that more CO2 is produced per unit of energy produced than with natural gas. (...) The discussion about the calculation method, carbon debt and the safeguarding of sustainable forest management will continue for some time. As a company, we also play a role in this, but that was beyond the scope of this assignment for the NVDE.

For more information, read the response of the Federation against biomass plants and deforestation here: [2020-03-16-thefab-also-the-biomass-virus-is-life-threatening-reaction-to-the-pro-biomass-lobby-report-of-royalhaskoningdhv-on-behalf-of-the-nvde-dutch.pdf](#)

Read the substantiated report here: [2020-03-16-thefab-reaction-with-substantiation-on-paid-pro-biomass-lobby-report-of-royal-haskoningdhv-on-behalf-of-the-nvde-dutch.pdf](#)

MSG-strategies (NVDE startup)

[MSG-strategies is a NVDE startup.](#) The Dutch Association for Sustainable Energy (NVDE) sounds very sustainable but is an association of the Dutch energy companies and a large number of other polluting companies in the Netherlands and is actively lobbying for biomass combustion. A large part of the board and employees of the NVDE are extensively featured in our paid pro-biomass lobby research part 4: [Consultants and lobbyists.](#) An example is Marc Londo who, in addition to his work as a scientist at Utrecht University and writing paid pro-biomass reports, is also the strategist of the NVDE. According to [his presentation from October 2017](#) the NVDE has these roles: *[Primary advocacy through politics, ministries \(primarily the Ministry of Economic Affairs\), interest groups, media. \(...\) Active in all 'transition paths' from the Energy Agenda and many executive steering groups and committees. \(...\) Direct influence via lobby. \(...\)](#)*

Conclusions

Based on our extensive research into the harmful consequences of burning woody biomass for energy generation, we have found that the vast majority of (independent) scientists have shown in many studies in the past twenty years that when burning wood in comparison with burning gas and coal:

- Significantly more harmful substances are released into the atmosphere.
- Nature and biodiversity are considerably more damaged.
- Sustainably extracted woody biomass also emits more CO2 (including the entire chain).
- Significantly more damage to the climate will be done over the next 50 years.

On the basis of studying hundreds of documents and research reports, we come to the following conclusions:

- The sustainability requirements for woody biomass are not mandatory and not sufficient.
- The sustainability requirements are not complied with or checked.
- Every part of the biomass chain, from scientific research, certification, harvesting, production, trade, transport, to incineration and the receipt of grants, is full of conflicts of interest and paid pro-biomass lobbying initiatives.
- The energy companies, consultancy and research bureaus and the universities involved have omitted

research results over the past twenty years to maintain the current lucrative trade in biomass due to significant financial earnings.

- The government (employees of the PBL & RVO) and members of the SER have been extensively informed for years and / or themselves involved in the conflicts of interest in this file.
- The government (at municipal, provincial and national level) has been informed for more than a decade by means of both public and confidential reports of the harmful effects of burning woody biomass on our health, nature, climate and thus our future, of the shortage of available biomass in the Netherlands and of the lack of sustainability requirements for imported woody biomass. Nevertheless, permits and subsidies have been issued at every administrative level for more than 600 biomass plants in the Netherlands.
- Granting subsidies for the burning of woody biomass in the upcoming crucial decades is counterproductive and accelerates global warming.
- The provision of subsidies for the burning of woody biomass is at the expense of the subsidies that are available for truly sustainable solutions.

Based on our extensive research into the paid pro-biomass lobby in the Netherlands, we come to the following conclusions:

- The top of RWE NL / Essent is responsible for devising and setting up the worldwide trade in woody biomass and has ensured that the other energy suppliers have joined the biomass cartel.
- Around 120 companies worldwide are responsible for the pro-biomass lobby aimed at the European Union and they spend up to 40 million per year on this according to the LobbyFacts Database.
- According to the LobbyFacts database, the following energy companies from the Netherlands are involved in the paid pro-biomass lobby: Uniper (E-ON), Vattenfall (Nuon), RWE (Essent), Veolia (Ennatuurlijk), ENGIE (GDF Suez, Electrabel).
- Several organizations such as consultancy and research agencies (including CE-Delft, EcoFys, Probos, ECN and TNO) and universities (including Utrecht, Wageningen and Delft) that publicly profile themselves as independent parties, provide paid pro-biomass reports (and services) while these organizations themselves have major interests in the conclusions included in the reports.
- A handful of Dutch scientists who are openly paid for their research by the pro-biomass lobby in the Netherlands (by several companies, energy suppliers and consultancy firms) have been setting policies for burning woody biomass for energy generation in the Netherlands for almost twenty years.
- Scientific research and advice from hundreds of (independent) scientists worldwide have not been included in current biomass policy for twenty years.
- Research results showing that a production forest or a managed forest absorbs and retains much less CO₂ than a natural forest with a lot of variation are systematically not included in the research reports of the organizations involved in the paid pro-biomass lobby.
- Factors such as the high degree of loss of biodiversity, damage to health, extra emissions of harmful substances and accelerated warming of the climate in connection with the increased CO₂ emissions and the discrepancy of the crucial timeframe within how much time we have to reduce the emissions and within how much time the remaining forests can absorb the extra CO₂ emissions are

systematically not included as consequences of the current biomass policy in the research results of the organizations involved in the paid pro-biomass lobby.

- For the top 400 people involved in the paid pro-biomass lobby in the Netherlands (and the European Union) it is of great financial importance to maintain the current biomass policy and have been working together extensively for almost 20 years to maintain those interests.
- The paid pro-biomass lobby has infiltrated Dutch politics and the provincial authorities in crucial places and thereby determines the current biomass policy in the Netherlands.
- MSG strategies, De Gemeent, CE-Delft and Royal HaskoningDHV all have an interest in the current lucrative policy with regard to the provision of subsidies for the burning of woody biomass and three of the four organizations have demonstrably published or cooperated several paid pro-biomass lobby reports in the past twenty years.

Advice

Based on reading and analyzing the hundreds of documents and research reports and extensive discussions with dozens of scientists and NGOs worldwide, we have prepared the following advice;

- Immediately end subsidies on the burning of woody biomass.
- Only stimulate truly sustainable solutions and the development of energy generation.
- Make every effort to prevent deforestation.
- Increase the planting of new varied forests as soon as possible.
- Make every effort to reduce the emission of harmful substances.
- Limit the influence of the paid pro-biomass lobby on our government, the board and the organizations of which we depend on advice for determining policy.

EDSP ECO

EDSP ECO is a non-profit foundation and consists entirely of volunteers who work with local and national initiatives and organizations to develop innovative sustainable technologies and solutions for the transition to a circular economy. With our research and project agency, we support organizations responsible for actions to protect the planet, end poverty or increase well-being. We provide support in the form of building and managing websites, conducting extensive research, setting up and offering digital campaigns, connecting stakeholders, giving public speeches and interviews and developing and rolling out environmentally friendly solutions. In addition, we actively focus on politicians and companies that contribute to pollution and climate change.

We do not receive any subsidies or financial contributions from the government or companies and we finance all our actions, investigations, lawsuits and multimedia campaigns ourselves. In 2020, we will file further lawsuits against government and industry to ensure that subsidies for burning woody biomass and deforestation are ended. Would you like to help us hold politicians and companies legally responsible and end this destructive policy once and for all? <https://www.biomassazaak.nl/en>

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