

# Climate Impact of Forest Biomass

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## Summary

Replacing coal with forest biomass in power stations is not a simple fix – forest biomass with long carbon payback periods will even increase atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels, putting climate targets at risk.

Since the publication of its report on “Multi-functionality and Sustainability in the European Union’s Forests” in April 2017, the European Academies’ Science Advisory Council (EASAC) issued several scientific papers and engaged with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the IEA and other stakeholders on the science underlying the use of forest biomass as a form of ‘renewable’ energy, within the debate and negotiations on several legislative packages. These include the Renewable Energy Directive (II and III), the Emissions Trading Directive, and both national and European initiatives on Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS).

## Impacts

- EASAC’s reports and commentaries on forest biomass were widely echoed in mainstream media, sparking political debate in particular in countries with high biomass in the energy mix, such as Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands.
- EASAC’s Environment Director Mike Norton was invited to contribute to several hearings both in the European and in national Parliaments (e.g. UK and NL).
- Key changes from the first to the second revision of the Renewable Energy Directive include stricter sustainability rules for forest biomass and a prioritization of “renewables of high environmental value”, like wind and solar.

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Forskare bedömer att de flesta typer av biobränslen från skog kan vara ohållbara. Foto: Fredrik Sandberg/TT

En EU-rapport bedömde nyligen att de flesta typer av biobränslen från skog kan vara ohållbara.

## Facilitators and barriers:

The topic continues to be an active issue in EU member states and internationally.

- ✓ Media echo was key to catching the interest of political stakeholders
- ✓ International NGO’s – e.g. WWF, Greenpeace, FERN Comite Schone Lucht -. use EASAC as reference
- ✓ The JRC has voiced similar concerns
- ✓ The EPRS references EASAC in related briefings
- ✓ IAP has acted as a multiplier beyond Europe
- Strong lobbies fight to maintain subsidies (incl. by attempts to discredit EASAC)
- Internationally, industry efforts persist to greenwash New efforts to link subsidies to ineffective BECCS justified by carbon ‘removals’ based on faulty accounting of net effects.
- There are still large public subsidies going to support an industry that is damaging to climate, forests and biodiversity