

POLICY BRIEF

BULGARIA

EXECUTIVE FOREST AGENCY

Executive Summary

The **Bulgarian Action Plan for Energy from Forest Biomass** is under development, with the broad participation of all relevant stakeholders in Bulgaria. BIO4ECO supports the process, sharing best EU practices and knowledge in the bioeconomy field. This policy tool is expected to have positive impact on some problems connected with the climate change, sustainable forest management, air pollution, efficiency of energy production, energy sources independence and others.

Introduction

The development of the Action Plan is necessary because of the lack of specialized policy tool that is focused on the usage of forest biomass for production of energy. Energy source independence, improvement of the energy production efficiency and fuel switch projects on the basis of existing wood resources are considered as significant issues and will be handled under BIO4ECO.

Analyses on the current situation in the forest sector and on the production of energy from wood biomass, identification of the main problems and bottle necks, proposal for strategic framework with relevant actions and expected results, and incorporation of the best EU practices to tackle the problems in the sector are the main objectives. Their preparation is prerequisite for development of serious strategic document that is implementable and will contribute to the improvement of the situation with energy production from wood in Bulgaria.

Approach and Results

The Bulgarian forests cover more than 1/3 of the country's territory. The annual harvest represents about half of the annual increment. Significant part of the harvested timber is used for energy purposes, predominantly in old burning places with low efficiency. Despite this, the country reached its 2020 renewable energy target. Taking into account that most energy resources are imported, there is room for improvement of the situation with using the existing wood resources – co-generation is still not used, people does not know about such opportunities, significant number of the best EU practices can be introduced, EU funding can be obtained, etc. Referring the previous. Bulgaria as project partner in BIO4ECO will make all possible efforts to influence the

Operational Programme “Innovations and Competitiveness”, widening the opportunities for investments in the renewable energy sector.

There is number of policy tools on national level that consider the forest biomass for energy purposes, but the country still misses specialized policy tool that is focused only on this vast resource. The Action plan, developed within BIO4ECO will make the difference. In its drafting the expert knowledge from all main forest stakeholders in the country is used – Local Stakeholder Group with over 100 participants is officially established. After its public presentation the understanding in society about the importance of these interconnected issues will be increased: sustainable forest management, wood for energy, climate change, best practices for energy efficiency, etc.

The analyses in the Plan are focused on several concrete topics, connected with the national and EU policy and legislative base, availability of forest resources, the utilization of the wood (including for heating), the opportunities that EU and other external funding provides, SWOT and PEST.

The strategic framework will include the Plan’s priorities, measures and activities, the expected results and the relevant indicators, the terms, necessary resources and responsible organizations. It will include monitoring scheme as well.

The Action plan will contribute in several directions – summary of updated and analysed information about the forests, forestry, energy from wood, opportunities, etc.; distribution of this information to the relevant interested parties; introduction and dissemination of best EU practices; contribution to create prerequisites for further improvement of the wood for energy issue – fuel switch, efficiency improvement, mobilization of residues, etc.

Conclusion

Wood is better than fossil fuels.

It is carbon neutral and gives to EU countries resource independence.

Sustainable forest management can have a significant positive impact on climate change mitigation. One of the most serious advantages of this resource is that wood does not consider the weather conditions (compared to solar and wind installations).

And it all starts with appropriate planning and subsequent implementation of measures that are drafted and fulfilled by all relevant stakeholders. The Action Plan for Energy from Wood Biomass is expected to become one of the necessary steps in this direction, supporting the implementation of the National Strategy for Development of the Forest Sector in the Republic of Bulgaria 2013-2020 and other relevant documents.

This document will:

- Give updated situation of the forestry and wood for energy sector
- Include the vision of all stakeholders for priorities, measures, etc.
- Foresee all necessary actions for the achievement of the expected results
- Be monitored within BIO4ECO phase II with the purpose to understand, report and improve (if necessary) the framework and/or its implementation.

The previous outputs will lead to the achievement of the following outcomes:

- Better understanding of the sustainable forest management by the society
- Better understanding of the importance to apply more efficient technologies in the energy production sector, incl. on the basis of the lessons learned and experience exchanged during the BIO4ECO study visits, thematic workshops, conferences, fair, bilateral meetings, etc.
- Prerequisites for decreased air pollution, particularly in the winter season in urban areas
- Climate change mitigation, incl. on the basis of emission reduction
- Increased energy resource independence

Implications and Recommendations

- Acceptance of the developed Action Plan and strong implementation by all responsible persons and organizations
- Focus on improvement of the wood for heating efficiency and relevant air pollution decreasing
- Wood mobilization within the limits of the sustainable forest management that will improve the rural and mountain areas development
- Special attention to fuel switch projects on the basis of the co-generation technology
- Broad public introduction and subsequent acceptance of the made efforts and achieved results
- Providing of technical assistance, information and financing to potential beneficiaries to implement the Action Plan's measures and achieve the expected results