

Better planning required if EU is to meet energy targets

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An important prerequisite for the European targets to be met is a significant increase in the use of biomass for energy. However, competition for biomass is expected to grow in the future, because biomass is used in the manufacture of many different products, including food, animal feed and various types of materials. The planning of biomass usage is poor, according to Niina Kautto.

"There is a gap between what is included in countries' and regions' current [biomass](#) plans and what should be included if they want to meet the targets."

Niina Kautto has studied plans and processes that concern the use of biomass for [energy generation](#) in eleven countries and eleven regions in the EU, including the UK, Germany, the [Netherlands](#) and [Spain](#). The plans have been developed partly as a result of the biomass action plan which the EU drew up in 2005 and which aimed to encourage greater biomass usage for energy.

Niina Kautto's research shows that some of the most significant shortcomings in the plans are that they often lack good quality figures of current use; biomass resources are often not estimated in a way that enables the figures to be compared. In many cases, it is also unclear how the national and regional targets contribute to the European targets.

Another weakness in the plans is the follow-up and evaluation of whether the plans were effective and resulted in the targets being met.

"It may seem logical that follow-up and evaluation should always be carried out, but the fact is that they are often insufficient", says Niina Kautto.

She proposes a range of measures to improve the plans and the processes that surround them.

"Really, it's about a simple quality management cycle, where a structured approach is taken", says Niina Kautto.

In simple terms, this means starting from a vision. From this, the external and internal factors that could affect the realisation of the vision are analysed and a goal is set. A strategy or plan of how to achieve the goal is drawn up and the plan is implemented. After this, an evaluation is carried out. Starting from the results of the evaluation, the process then begins again and the plans and strategies are adjusted to increase the likelihood of achieving the goal.

Another important measure to improve the plans is to include and systematically evaluate how the use of biomass for energy generation affects other possible fields of use. This is something that is currently missing in the plans that Niina Kautto has gone through. Moreover, as many stakeholders as possible should be included in the work, and there should be continual communication between those involved on different levels, such as local councils, regions and nations, says Niina Kautto.

"Even if it may seem time-consuming, it is often worth the trouble, because a good process where everyone feels involved leads to greater understanding and then it becomes a lot easier to implement the plan."

Since Niina Kautto started her work, a new EU directive on renewable energy has been drawn up. The directive implies that all EU countries must now plan not only their biomass usage, but also all their use of

renewable energy.

"However, many of the basic problems remain the same, so my recommendations could be used here as well", says Niina Kautto.

More information: Niina Kautto recently defended her PhD thesis, which is entitled Towards more coherent and sustainable biomass policy: examining European biomass-to-energy planning:

www.lunduniversity.lu.se/o.o.i ... 12683&postid=2063354

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