European Renewable Energy Policies might impact on the Pulp and Paper industry’s competitiveness and jobs

CEPI and EMCEF stand for the National Associations and Trade Unions and through them for the companies and workers in the European paper industry. The European pulp and paper industries represented by CEPI deliver annually about 100 million tonnes of paper and board and 40 million tonnes of pulp. Today the European pulp and paper industry realises 25% of the energy production from solid biomass in Europe and more than 50% of its primary energy consumption is based on biomass. The European pulp and paper industry directly employs 264000 people and indirectly some 1.8 million. The European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers Federation (EMCEF) organises 2.5 million workers through 130 trade unions from 35 countries. Among the industrial areas covered by EMCEF is the pulp and paper making.

EMCEF and CEPI have, since two years, a dialogue aiming to contribute to sustainable development. The dialogue concerns social issues, but also how to improve the conditions for the pulp and paper industry in Europe. A common objective is to secure as many jobs as possible. As one part of the dialogue CEPI and EMCEF have discussed the use of wood for other purposes than paper or wood products making.

The competitiveness of the European pulp and paper industry highly depends on the energy prices and the prices of its raw materials: wood or recycled fibre. While the EU energy policy aims to raise the share of Renewable Energy Sources (RES) up to 20% by 2020, EMCEF and CEPI highlight the risk of disproportionate subsidies, fiscal measures and raw material supply guarantees, that can impact on the access of the European paper industry to its raw materials and jeopardises the future of the industry and its employment in Europe.

Together EMCEF and CEPI consider that the availability of raw material – be it wood or recycled fibre – is vital for the pulp and paper industry to deliver the high quality every day products that society needs. Therefore, wood should be provided from sustainable managed sources regardless of its end-use and its origin. European Biomass policies should focus on increasing sustainable production of biomass and aim to avoid distorted competition between different users of biomass.

The expertise of the pulp and paper industry in most efficient biomass based energy production as well as in the mobilisation of wood biomass resources makes the industry an enabler that can help to increase the chances of achieving the RES objectives. Therefore, EMCEF and CEPI offer European policy-makers as well as the governments their involvement in the setting of all RES targets and the measures to achieve them, when the time of developing national/regional Biomass action plans will come.

EMCEF and CEPI recommend benchmarking practice in terms of sustainability as found in the cascade use of renewable raw materials known as Lansink’s ladder. It consists of using renewable raw materials for added value uses such as in paper production first, after use the paper can be recycled (up to six times) and, at the end it can be burned for energy recovery as the last steps of the use of biomass. This principle exists in other areas of EU policy and ensures optimising the added economic value of using the valuable raw materials and lengthening the period in which CO₂ is safely stored in products. Furthermore it preserves competitiveness and existing employment in the EU manufacturing industry.
EMCEF and CEPI urge the European Council of Ministers and further EU and national institutions to take into account these recommendations in the development of policies and measures on renewable energy sources. In the further development of their dialogue, CEPI and EMCEF will continue to follow this crucial matter.

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