Position Paper

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No support for co-firing biomass in coal plants

CEPI calls upon the European Commission and member states to remove support for co-firing of wood in coal plants which only produce electricity. In addition CEPI asks not to resort to mandatory co-firing shares. Biomass that has a use as raw material should not be used as a source of energy. CEPI calls to promote the transition towards much more efficient coal plants.

The European Commission has published a communication on the future of Renewable Energy Sources in Europe. A future binding target is amongst the issues to discuss. The situation in Europe has however dramatically changed. As the economic crisis continues member states have less appetite for and funds available for support schemes.

One of the Renewable Energy Sources is Biomass. Carbon neutrality of biomass can contribute to the European CO2 reduction targets. Biomass is a renewable, recyclable and climate friendly raw material. It is the basis for the much needed Bio economy in Europe.

The renewable energy directive of 2007 (2009/28/EC) stated that "In the case of biomass, Member States shall promote conversion technologies that achieve a conversion efficiency of at least 85 % for residential and commercial applications and at least 70 % for industrial applications". This language was not strong enough, although it gives a clear direction. Member states should not support but further even avoid the use of biomass in coal plants with the current low efficiencies. Supporting co-firing of biomass in coal plants at low efficiencies is an environmental harmful subsidy. This applies as well to national policies building on mandatory co-firing shares.

Efficient use of biomass does not include the use of biomass for co-firing in coal plants which only produce electricity. The current average efficiency of coal plants is between 30% and 35%. Burning wood, the main biomass source, in coal plants at these efficiencies is a waste of raw material, not a climate reduction measure. The same applies to biomass fired power stations without combined heat and power.

Note to the Editor

CEPI aisbl - The Confederation of European Paper Industries

The Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI) is a Brussels-based non-profit making organisation regrouping the European pulp and paper industry and championing this industry’s achievements and the benefits of its products. Its collective expertise provides a unique source of information both for and on the industry; coordinating essential exchanges of experience and knowledge among its members, and with the industry stakeholders. Through its 18 member countries (17 European Union members plus Norway) CEPI represents some 520 pulp, paper and board producing companies across Europe, ranging from...
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