CEPI Position on Forest-related Sinks

The European pulp and paper industry is a significant user of wood, a natural and renewable raw material. Even though consumption of paper and board products has increased, CEPI’s members have continuously improved their energy efficiency and reduced their Greenhouse gas emissions through improved CHP installations, an increased use of biofuels as a replacement for fossil fuels and by other actions.

Statement

CEPI acknowledges the importance of taking action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It considers that long-term policies should principally aim at reducing emission levels. The European pulp and paper industry will continue its efforts to reduce its GHG emissions further by improving its production processes and making more use of renewable inputs (current achievement: 8% CO₂ reduction between 2003 and 2007). Currently 55% of the total primary energy consumption of the paper industry is already biomass-based renewable energy.

CEPI insists on the need to ensure the economic, ecological and social functions of forests. They provide raw material for products and energy production combined with biological diversity and recreational values. CEPI also recognises the contribution of forests to the efforts in reducing the global warming effect. As stated in the Chapter 9 on Forestry of the Working Group 3 contribution to the IPCC 4th Assessment Report¹: “In the long term, a sustainable forest management strategy aimed at maintaining or increasing forest carbon stocks, while producing an annual sustained yield of timber, fibre or energy from the forest, will generate the largest sustained mitigation benefit.” and “Forestry can make a very significant contribution to a low-cost global mitigation portfolio that provides synergies with adaptation and sustainable development.”

The production of pulp and paper is a carbon cycle (starting from forest right through to recycling, as well as energy recovery at the end of the fibres’ life cycle), that recognises the product value chain. European decision makers should acknowledge the importance of the cascading use of wood by sharing a similar approach when considering long lasting measures to reduce global warming. The recognition of wood-based products as carbon sinks should be integrated at an early stage in the thoughts on technical measures to meet the EU’s renewable energy commitment. In doing so, the EU would recognise the product value chain and would encourage the use of wood-based products in place of products made of non-renewable raw material to reduce global warming. In consequence, through an increased importance of forests and the raw material they provide sustainable forest management would be secured.

As far as forest-related sinks are concerned, CEPI and its members welcome encouragement of sustainable afforestation and reforestation. These practices should be favoured. In addition to the sinks effect and the consideration of the carbon cycle approach, they might increase the availability of raw material for the production of carbon-sequestering wood-based products as well as the amount of biomass available for the production of renewable energy. With reference to the latter, such an approach would be consistent with the commitments of the European Union in their Energy Package from March 2007.

CEPI and its members are committed to avoid deforestation. In that respect, the industry is implementing sustainable procurement policies, that include compliance to the CEPI Code of Conduct for Legal Logging and an increased use of certified raw materials.

Technical measures aimed at enhancing carbon sequestration in forest stands through forest management activities could lead to an inverse effect and should therefore be envisaged cautiously. This is especially valid, if these measures are supported by market-distorting instruments such as subsidies, fiscal measures, etc. While it will probably result in a positive effect for carbon fixation in the short term, it would threaten the availability of wood for further processing and, hence, the ability of the industry to produce climate-friendly wood-based products to satisfy global market demand.

It is known that climate change might lead to changes in forest tree species distribution and/or productivity, as well as increasing the likelihood of major disasters like storms, fires, floodings, pests and diseases, etc. CEPI and its members call on the EU to assess the vulnerability of Europe’s forests to climate change and explore options to address it.

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 mission is to promote the member’s business sector by taking specific actions notably, by monitoring and analysing activities and initiatives in the areas of industry, environment, energy, forestry, recycling, fiscal policies and competitiveness in general. Through CEPI, the paper industry increases its visibility and acts on emerging issues, making expert and constructive contributions on behalf of the industry.

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, the ability to provide technical assistance to legislators and to identify independent experts on specific issues.

Through its 18 member countries (16 European Union members plus Norway and Switzerland) CEPI represents some 800 pulp, paper and board producing companies across Europe, ranging from small and medium sized companies to multi-nationals, and 1200 paper mills. Together they represent 27% of world production.