

Press release

Cepi welcomes EU Commission plans to pave the way for the circular use of carbon

December 15th, 2021

Climate science is clear: the reduction of fossil fuel emissions should take precedence as a solution to climate change. However, 1.5°C compatible IPCC scenarios referenced in the new EU Commission Communication on Sustainable Carbon Cycles include carbon removals, as a way to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Cepi welcomes this Communication which acknowledges the important role that bio-based industries and sustainable forest management must play. Our industry has the potential to support a new approach tackling climate change by deploying the economy of the future.

The alignment of the European forest fibre and paper industry with the objectives set in the Communication is not new. The sector has been, over the past decade, leading the EU's manufacturing sector in its commitment to increasingly reduce its reliance on fossil carbon for energy. More recently, it has also pledged to develop the potential of its sustainable products. The European forest fibre and paper industry is a world champion in recycling, which contributes to biogenic carbon storage and cycles. Building on this experience, the industry is looking for further opportunities in the circular use of biogenic carbon.

The new Commission plan however recognises the role of Sustainable Forest Management practiced in Europe in enhancing sustainable carbon cycles. The protection of biodiversity, an integrative part of Sustainable Forest Management, is now coupled with practices that enhance forests capacity to mitigate climate change by pumping carbon out of the atmosphere. Cepi stresses that ageing forests are vulnerable to climate change, and **the permanence of forest sinks is not guaranteed in absence of active forest management practices** and climate adaptation strategies. The forest fibre and paper industry has already indicated that it will actively support the European Commission initiative [to plant 3 billion additional trees by 2030](#), contributing to a younger tree cover and increasing our chances to reach the EU's climate ambitions.

The forest fibre and paper industry's value chain already explores new business models based on biogenic carbon cycles. Companies in the sector use satellite imagery and Copernicus services to monitor their forests' carbon content, and pulp and paper mills can achieve negative emissions thanks to a combination of bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS). Cepi also holds a strategic position in setting voluntary standards and guidelines for the sector, which are relevant to the development of the future carbon removal certification framework. For that reason, it stands ready to contribute to the carbon farming expert group which is to be set by the Commission.

Quote: "Time and again, the European forest fibre and paper industry has led the way in developing business models that benefit both sustainability and circularity. It is now ideally positioned to do so in the new emerging twin paradigms of a bioeconomy and a carbon economy. Circularity, climate mitigation and bioeconomy are highly synergetic and work best hand in hand. For that we need systemic policy approaches." **Jori Ringman, Cepi General Director**

Note to editor:

For press inquiries, please contact Piotr Pogorzelski, Media Relations Manager, at
E: p.popogorzelski@cepi.org
T: +32.4.95.12.67.88

For examples of low-carbon innovation in the forest fibre and paper industry, please consult our dedicated website <https://reinvest2050.eu/> and the latest [REINVEST2050 brochure](#).

About Cepi:

Cepi is the European association representing the paper industry. We offer a wide range of renewable and recyclable wood-based fibre solutions to EU citizens: from packaging to textile, hygiene and tissue products, printing and graphic papers as well as speciality papers, but also bio-chemicals for food and pharmaceuticals, bio-composites and bioenergy.

We are a responsible industry: 92% of our raw materials are sourced in Europe and certified as sustainable, 91% of the water we use is returned to the environment, in good condition. We are the world champion in recycling at the rate of 72%. At the forefront of the decarbonisation and industrial transformation of our economy, we embrace digitalisation and bring 20 billion value addition to the European economy and €5.5 billion investments annually.

More information about our sustainability performance [here](#).

Through its 18 national associations, Cepi gathers 500 companies operating 895 mills across Europe and directly employing more than 180,000 people.