

Press release

Cepi welcomes EU Parliament vote on Carbon Removals, but calls for a definition of renewable carbon

Brussels, 10 April 2024

The EU Parliament put today its stamp of approval on the EU's carbon removal certification framework. The regulation provides guiding principles for a set of methodologies, still in development, to certify processes to remove carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere. Much still needs to be defined through a dedicated expert group. Such definitions should include 'renewable carbon', the missing link to a circular, climate-friendly economic model.

According to the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), all realistic pathways to limit global warming to 1.5°C will involve the use of carbon removals. Although technological carbon removals are possible and will be needed on the long term, removing carbon from the atmosphere is a natural function of forests, where **they can be enhanced via sustainable forest management**.

This makes sustainable forestry a formidable tool for climate action and, as recognised in today's vote, also for the protection of biodiversity. Still, it is broadly agreed that it is reducing CO₂ emissions in the first place, that should be the focus of climate policy. This means that the forest carbon sink, which provides the bulk of the cheapest carbon removals currently certified outside of the new regulatory framework **should not be used to compensate for other sectors insufficient emissions reductions**.

Integrated in a sustainable management of biomass resources, the manufacturing of forest products as well as bioenergy with carbon capture, use and storage or the production of biochar, are other ways of capitalising on carbon removals from forests by trapping this 'biogenic carbon' underground or in products. This is different however from **capturing fossil-based CO₂ from industrial activities, which is also important but does not remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, only avoids potential emissions**.

Appropriate criteria now need to be applied through the delegated acts describing certification methodologies for different removal methods, to **ensure that the specific benefits of biogenic carbon are recognised and avoid any risk of greenwashing. A solution is to use a concept already delineated in international standards, that of 'renewable carbon'**, where renewability is defined as the ability of a resource to replenish naturally at source at a rate at least the same as consumption.

The principle could be the basis for example for the certification of long-lasting wood and bio-based products and materials. While this type of removals will trap carbon for a shorter time than others, the scale of their contribution to climate mitigation is already hard to ignore. A study commissioned by Cepi shows that **forests and forest-based products had a net impact of -806 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2020, corresponding to 20% of all fossil emissions in the European Union**. About half of the effect can be attributed to forest products and, in an economy which needs to become less dependent on fossils, it could increase in the future.

Quote by Jori Ringman, Cepi Director General

"Similarly, to renewable energy displacing fossil energy, renewable materials displace at least some of the demand for fossil materials. An effect that could be increased within certain limits so that European forests continue expanding. But this will not happen without appropriate regulation."

Notes to editor:

For press inquiries to Cepi, please contact
Piotr Pogorzelski, Media Relations Manager,

E: p.popogorzelski@cepi.org

T: +32.4.95.12.67.88

For more information on Industry commitments,
please consult

[Cepi's Sustainable Product Pledge](#),

[Cepi's Pledge to support the 3 billion trees initiative](#).

[The 4evergreen cross-industry alliance](#).

For our 2023 industry statistics, please refer to

[Cepi Preliminary Statistics 2023](#)

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: 85% of our raw materials are sourced in Europe and certified as sustainable, 92% of the water we use is returned in good condition to the environment. We are the world champion in recycling at the rate of 70.5%. At the forefront of the decarbonisation and industrial transformation of our economy, we embrace digitalisation and bring 25 billion value addition to the European economy and €5 billion investments annually. Through its 19 national associations, Cepi gathers 490 companies operating 870 mills across Europe and directly employing more than 180,000 people.

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