

## BIOMASS

Biomass is all renewable raw material of plant or animal origin destined for non-food use. It is one of the most important sources of renewable energy.



There are 5 big families of renewable energies: hydraulic, wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass. Their renewable character means that they regenerate themselves and are inexhaustible if used sustainably due to natural cycles. Aside from Europe being faced with multiple energy challenges, the world economic context is not favourable to economic operators in the countryside. **ELO therefore advocates for a sustainable and long term response through focusing on biomass or “green coal”.** These alternative energy sources provide landowners and farmers with a major opportunity to diversify their income.

Moreover, compared to traditional energies, biomass has many advantages: a relatively low cost, it is less susceptible to market fluctuations or dependant on the oil-producing countries, and, of course, contributes to the promotion of regional economic structures.

The three main types of biomass are: farm, forestry and safe waste resources. The sustainable use of biomass is part of a virtuous circle that enables the efficient management of waste, supporting an integrated approach : biomass becomes biofuels, biogas or fertilizers which are then transported and spread onto the fields, thus fighting against the loss of soil organic matter, promoting new crops and considerably reducing the ecological footprint of energy consumption when compared with fossil fuels.

Given the energy challenges of the future, the strategic importance of biomass is currently undervalued. It is important to understand that market creation relies on there being a demand. **It is ELO’s role, together with public authorities, to show that the biomass market is full of possibilities and worth investing in.**

It is thus crucial to clearly identify regulatory, market and technological barriers to uptake and solutions to overcome them.

The biomass market lacks political, financial and administrative support allowing it to compete with fossil energy. One of the factors of resistance in the Member States is the problem of excise duties. Tax breaks are indeed one major tool for increasing the competitiveness of biofuels, and it has to be coupled with local infrastructures and connections to the existing network.

**ELO firmly believes that the goals of the Biomass and Biofuels Action Plans can be reached as part of a balanced approach and with a view to achieving sustainable development.** It can lead to a win-win situation which could be profitable at once for the rural world, governments, the environment and investors. It is a major opportunity for revitalising the countryside by reconciling the economy and the environment for the profit of our European society as a whole.

*In 2005/ early 2006 the Commission proposed a Biomass and a Biofuels Action Plan, highlighting the need for a coordinated political approach. The aim is to reduce oil imports by 8%, prevent greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 209 million tons of CO2 per year and create around 300,000 new jobs, thus meeting the requirements of the Lisbon and Göteborg agendas. These Action Plans announce a number of initiatives such as the review of the biofuels Directive, the review of the implementation of the energy crop premium and the review of the Fuel Quality Directive to be carried out in 2006.*