

Joint press release with the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection

German cabinet has approved national biomass action plan

Following a proposal by the Federal Agricultural Minister Ilse Aigner and the Federal Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel the cabinet has approved the National Biomass Action Plan (Energy) today. With this plan the Federal Government is supporting the EU Commission which, in its Biomass Action Plan published in 2005, called upon the EU member states to draw up national action plans for the energy use of biomass.

"The Biomass Action Plan will expand the use of bioenergy in Germany in an efficient and sustainable way. This will make an essential contribution to value added, in particular in rural areas," said Federal Agriculture Minister Ilse Aigner.

Federal Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel stated: "Bioenergy will remain our most important renewable energy source in the medium term. The sustainability of biomass generation is therefore gaining in importance. We are working very hard on transposing the European sustainability requirements which are expected to enter into force at the end of May."

Bioenergy already covers almost 5 percent of the German primary energy demand. The use of bioenergy means preserving fossil resources, contributing essentially to climate protection, creating value added and generating a significant number of jobs. In order to realise both the targets of the EU energy package of April 2009 and those of the German government's integrated energy and climate programme of August 2007, it is intended to increase this share significantly by 2020.

The biomass action plan shows the strategies to be applied in order to realize the expansion of the use of bioenergy in an efficient and sustainable way and the specific measures which must be taken. A supplementary action plan on the material use of biomass is intended as a next step.

Theoretically speaking, national resources for bioenergy would suffice to reach the targets and double the share of bioenergy in Germany by 2020. However, it must be taken into account that imported biomass is increasingly important and that meeting the demand solely with domestic biomass has thus become unrealistic for competitive reasons. In this context it must be avoided that the expansion of biomass production for energy use comes into conflict with food security, the right to food and the protection of the environment and nature.

The extent to which we will manage to expand the use of biomass will depend decisively on the economic framework conditions, i.e. the development of energy prices and the market situations for food and feedstuffs as well as technological progress and the innovative strength of our economy. The Federal government can only provide the overall framework and incentives with the instruments available to it.

In the long run, the use of biomass has to be optimised with regard to its greenhouse gas reduction potential and its energy efficiency. The action plan includes measures initiating a development in this direction and orienting the promotion of biomass energy uses more consistently to this uniform goal. This includes support for increased use for heating purposes and calculating support for biofuels on the basis of their net contribution to climate protection.

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