



Sustainable Biomass Program

The Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP) is an **independent voluntary certification scheme for (solid) woody biomass**, in the form of wood pellets and woodchips, used in industrial, large-scale energy production. SBP does not certify other forms of bioenergy, such as agricultural biomass or biofuels.

SBP-certified biomass accounts for the **majority of imports of woody biomass into the EU**. In 2019, 61% of the industrial pellets consumed in the EU-28 were SBP-certified. Globally, around one-quarter of biomass pellet production was SBP-certified. We have over 300 certificate holders – biomass producers, traders and end-users – across 31 countries.

Our unique online **Data Transfer System** sets us apart from other certification schemes in the sector. It transfers sustainability and energy data associated with each biomass transaction, allowing GHG emissions calculations to be made for the entire life cycle of the biomass.

International and European climate goals cannot be met without biomass. Our purpose is to facilitate the economically, environmentally and socially responsible management of biomass enabling climate goals to be met.

SBP is an internationally recognised solution for biomass producers, traders and end-users to demonstrate compliance with regulatory requirements. Currently, SBP is the only scheme that can be used to demonstrate compliance in the four key biomass markets of geographical Europe (Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK). SBP has also applied for recognition under the re-cast EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED II).

These guiding principles underpin our promise of good biomass:

1. SBP is an **independent, multi-stakeholder governed organisation** with third party accreditation and certification decision-making, committed to transparency in governance, standards-setting and operations, which together underpin the credibility and robustness of an SBP certificate.
2. **Robust requirements with which certificate holders must comply**. Standards cover biodiversity, high conservation value areas as well as social safeguards and guarantee feedstock comes from growing forests. The scheme incorporates world-leading sustainable forest management certifications.
3. A **regional, risk-based approach**, which allows a deeper look into the real risks of sourcing feedstock and producing and distributing biomass, demanding appropriate risk mitigation measures to be taken in accordance with the level of identified risk.
4. SBP's **Data Transfer System** tracks biomass produced and sold with an SBP claim throughout the supply chain. All biomass with an SBP claim is accompanied by verified sustainability and energy data, such as feedstock origin and type, as well as energy used in production and transportation.
5. **Facilitation of international trade** stimulating a market for legally and sustainably harvested low value wood, which in turn preserves continuous and sustainable forest management practices, such as replanting, fire prevention and thinning. Supporting the use of biomass helps to ensure forests stay as forests and are not converted to other land uses. SBP also ensures the implementation of **circular economy practices** by establishing market viability for low value wood.

As the EU works to implement the recast Renewable Energy Directive and looks to increase its 2030 climate targets, SBP can play a key role in facilitating sustainable supply chains with transparent and verified transaction systems and independent check and balance systems, as well as supporting business opportunities enabling reforestation and afforestation.

Better regulation principles for the use of biomass for energy production

Based on SBP's experience of the evolving regulatory landscape for the use of solid biomass for energy, we have identified the following principles that if followed, will lead to better regulation for the use of biomass for energy. Most of these principles (2-7) are an important part of SBP's certification system. Our experience shows that these principles provide a basis for robust standards that are practicable for biomass supply chain actors.

1. Harmonisation and certainty of sustainability requirements

Certainty of sustainability requirements as far as possible is necessary to promote a stable market. Under REDII, there is potential for biomass to be considered sustainable in one Member State but not in another. This has the potential to act as a barrier to trade and lead to market inefficiency through the establishment of sub-markets, with flows of biomass from regions with stringent criteria to regions with less stringent criteria.

REDII requires the Commission to assess the impact of any such additional sustainability criteria and to propose harmonisation as appropriate. SBP believes that this is important. The EU's global leadership as a standard-setter for sustainability criteria will be reinforced by consistency and clarity of a single set of sustainability criteria.

2. A regional/landscape approach

In line with the REDII (Article 2(30)) definition of 'sourcing area', SBP's experience shows that a regional level approach to assessing the sustainability and legality of forest biomass provides a credible degree of compliance, where this is combined with the application of risk mitigation measures dependent on the local circumstances. Forest level determination is neither practicable for producers, nor beneficial for the accuracy of assessments because the supply base of a biomass producer is often larger than a single Forest Management Unit.

3. A risk-based approach

A risk-based approach allows a deeper look into the real risks of sourcing feedstock and identifies appropriate mitigation measures in accordance with the level of risk. It opens up market opportunities for small forest owners that may otherwise be excluded due to the cost and administrative burden of forest level certification. SBP's risk-based approach provides equal safeguards to forest level certification and has proved to be more effective and traceable through placing the burden on producers (not landowners) to comply.

4. Use of clear and well-understood terms and definitions

Use of clear terms and definitions that are well understood in the global forest and woody (solid) biomass industry will ensure that regulatory regimes are workable. Some terms that find their way into common usage can be misleading, for example, the term 'whole tree' is a poor definition. Thinnings may be considered to be whole trees, when in reality they are instrumental in delivering the economic, social and environmental benefits of sustainable forest management.

5. Focus on desired outcomes

Focusing on desired outcomes and facilitating the delivery of those outcomes through a management system approach of 'plan, do, check and act' will deliver more social, environmental and economic benefits than a highly prescriptive approach that is more prone to having unintended consequences.

6. Comparable and transparent claims

A biomass producer that satisfactorily demonstrates compliance with the SBP standards requirements receives a certificate. As a certificate holder, the producer is entitled to produce and sell biomass with an SBP claim, provided the feedstock meets SBP requirements and the SBP-certified management system is implemented during production of the biomass. Transparent communication and understanding of the material flows through the supply chain is important to prevent illegal and irresponsibly harvested wood entering the biomass markets.

7. Recognition of international accreditation bodies

Certification Bodies must become accredited if they wish to offer SBP certification services. SBP, together with other well-established certification schemes, uses an international accreditation body, Assurance Services International, for accreditation services. Importantly, that allows the international character of the scheme to be accommodated and is essential to ensure the credibility of voluntary certification schemes that operate across international markets.