

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Cabinet of Commissioner Günther H. Oettinger
Head of Cabinet

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[REDACTED] Greenpeace European Unit
[REDACTED], Climate & Forests Programme, ClientEarth
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E-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for the letter sent on 22 June 2012 to Commissioner Oettinger on behalf of BirdLife, Client Earth, The European Environment Bureau, FERN and Greenpeace on the issue of biomass sustainability. Commissioner Oettinger has asked me to answer on his behalf. As you emphasized, solid biomass is today the main renewable energy source used in the EU, and it is key for meeting our 2020 climate and energy targets.

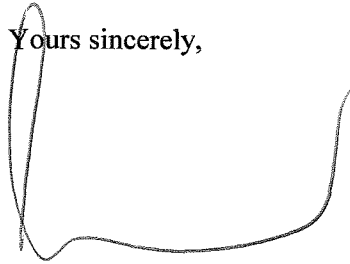
In its 2010 report on sustainability requirements for the use of solid and gaseous biomass sources in electricity, heating and cooling generation (COM(2010)11), the Commission recommended that Member States, which had adopted (or planned to adopt) national sustainability rules for biomass, to follow in almost all respects the EU criteria applying to biofuels and bioliquids. Member States should also stimulate higher energy conversion efficiency of biomass.

The Commission is currently assessing the effectiveness of this non-binding approach. In particular, we are considering whether the absence of EU harmonized criteria could negatively affect the good functioning of the internal market, whether sustainability issues associated to biomass use have been sufficiently addressed by national rules, and how international developments regarding LULUCF accounting (Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry) and REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) relate to biomass sustainability. To this end, the Directorate-General for Energy has commissioned external research on the economic and environmental impacts of national and possible EU sustainability regulations. They have also carried out extensive public consultation to collect stakeholders and Member States views.

The Commission is now considering the best way forward and will report shortly on the implementation of the 2010 recommendations and on whether additional EU measures on biomass sustainability may be necessary and appropriate.

Thank you again for sharing your views with the Commission, which will be considered in our analysis.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'M' followed by a horizontal line and a small upward curve at the end.

Michael A. Köhler