



Environmental Paper Network

FORESTS, CLIMATE & BIOMASS WORKING GROUP

End Public Funding of Large-scale Biomass Energy, Divert it to Forest Protection and Restoration

Funding the burning of forest wood at scale in biomass energy generators, is a prime example of the *least* effective and *most* destructive way to deploy forests to combat climate change, according to the Forests, Climate and Biomass Working Group of the Environmental Paper Network at the Bonn Climate Negotiations.

The IPCC is clear that 22% of global emissions are from land and forests. Aiding and abetting these emissions via public financing, as well as with government subsidies and incentives, is madness.

It makes even less sense when we take into account that, in their AR6 Report, the IPCC tells us that among the mitigation options available, the protection, improved management, and restoration of forests and other ecosystems, has the *greatest* potential to reduce emissions and/or sequester carbon. Further, these options are available and ready to deploy, allowing emissions reductions to be achieved relatively quickly, whereas carbon lost from carbon rich ecosystems such as forests is irrecoverable within the 2050 timeline for achieving net zero emissions¹.

To be clear, protecting and restoring natural forests is the most effective action we can take in relation to forests. In addition, we recognise that the best custodians and protectors of forests are their indigenous guardians, in whose care they survive and flourish.

So where is the money for that vital protection? And why are the world's forests being burned at accelerating rates, based on an underlying rationale that at some time they will grow back, despite evidence otherwise? The answer is that it originates with a fundamental flaw in the UNFCCC's carbon accounting and is compounded by industry opportunism and lies.

Unpacking this: Burning forest biomass emits as much CO₂ per unit of energy as coal, yet while energy sector carbon accounts show the emissions for burning fossil fuels, zero are recorded for bioenergy. Most policy makers assume this is the actual situation and industry has been keen to capitalise on this misapprehension. Public financing and government subsidies and incentives have followed.

Only carbon accounting geeks know to look in land sector accounts for bioenergy and, even there, they won't find any emissions directly attributed. They are to be inferred from carbon stock changes, and due to international trade in forest biomass, the emissions will frequently be in the accounts and responsibility of an entirely different country to that which burns biomass to generate energy.

We are working here at the UNFCCC to get them to wake up to the need to make carbon accounting of biomass energy fit for purpose. We are also calling for redirection of public finance to real solutions, such as natural ecosystem protection which is more cost effective *and* would benefit forest communities rather than private sector companies. Results on the carbon accounting balance sheet will be real and not illusory, in contrast to the biomass behemoth.

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¹ IPCC AR6 WG 111 on mitigation Page 7.4.2 lines 28-32 & 41-47