**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Misleading report on wood based bioenergy misinterprets facts**

*WBA disagrees with the Chatham House report – Woody Biomass for Power and Heat: Impacts on the Global Climate*

World Bioenergy Association (WBA) strongly opposes the Chatham House Report: “*Woody biomass for power and heat: Impacts on the Global Climate”.* There are a number of conclusions and recommendations from the report which are not based on facts and current level of understanding of climate and energy issues. WBA would like to emphasize certain key points to dispel the findings of the report:

**Fossil fuel use is the leading cause of climate change**

This report doesn’t consider the simple fact that the current climate change and global warming is caused by fossil fuels and not bioenergy. It blurs the line separating emissions from burning carbon stored in the earth’s crust for millions of years (fossil fuels) and carbon released due to the use of bioenergy as part of the natural earth carbon cycle. Biomass energy is the oldest form of energy source for mankind which has in no way caused the current climate crisis.

**Biomass is carbon neutral**

The carbon contained in the biomass – subsequently converted to energy – originates from the atmosphere. The use of carbon biomass does not add additional greenhouse gases to the atmosphere as compared to fossil fuels. Even if the biomass is not used for energy, it would return to the atmosphere as wood decay. Theories on carbon debt and ‘payback time’ of biomass are not credible, because they are based on the unrealistic assumption that trees are first burned and then grown! Moreover, well managed forests absorb considerably more carbon from the atmosphere than reserved set-side forests.

**Narrow boundaries of time and forest area leads to misleading results**

Any forest ecosystem has a lifetime of centuries and covers many hectares. If an analysis of the carbon cycle of a forest is limited to a short time period like couple of decades or a single stand, the interaction over time and space might be overlooked as mentioned in the report, and misleading conclusions are the consequence. Impact of bioenergy should always be assessed on a landscape level and for a longer duration of time.

**Forest based biomass is not all bioenergy**

The report attempts to unsuccessfully simplify the complex system of energy generation from biomass. It is true that forest based biomass is the largest contributor to the bioenergy system but it is one of the several sources of bioenergy. There are numerous other sources including energy crops, agricultural residues, municipal solid wastes etc. The report conveniently overlaps forest biomass with all bioenergy.

**Sustainable forest management is key for healthy forests**

To avoid a net shift of carbon from the forests to the atmosphere, forests have to be managed in a sustainable way. WBA always supports the basic requirements for sustainable biomass as:

* Not more biomass is harvested than regrown in a given biomass system
* The fertility of the soil is safeguarded as well as the water quality
* The utilization of biomass is managed for protection of biodiversity

These are basic rules inherent to any sustainability scheme. It is the responsibility of the governments, private companies and landowners to enforce these rules for sustainable management. To safeguard the environment, and to meet desired social and economic criteria; sustainability standards have been created including RSB, WBA, GBEP, ISO and others.

**Bioenergy sector has many socio-economic benefits**

Biomass energy sector employs millions of people, leads to local economic development by providing benefits for farmers and forestry owners, ensures energy security for nations trying to reduce their use of imported fossil fuels and is a crucial energy source for a sustainable transition of the future.

WBA strongly supports the opinion from leading researchers from IEA Bioenergy who have presented fact based response to the findings of the report ([Link](http://www.ieabioenergy.com/publications/iea-bioenergy-response/)).

WBA strongly recommends Chatham House to reconsider the findings of the report.

Further reading:

* WBA factsheet on carbon neutrality of forests ([Link](http://worldbioenergy.org/uploads/Factsheet%20-%20Carbon%20neutrality.pdf))
* Solid biomass as cornerstone of future energy portfolio ([Link](http://worldbioenergy.org/news/114/50/Solid-biomass-is-cornerstone-of-future-energy-portfolio))
* WBA blog on bioenergy and sustainability ([Link](http://www.worldbioenergy.org/news/329/56/Bioenergy-and-Sustainability))

**For more information, please contact:**

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*About the WBA*

*The World Bioenergy Association (WBA) is the global organization dedicated to supporting and representing the wide range of actors in the bioenergy sector. Its members include national and regional bioenergy organizations, institutions, companies and individuals.*

*The purpose of WBA is to promote the increasing utilization of bioenergy globally in an efficient, sustainable, economic and environmentally friendly way.*

*Since its foundation in May 2008, WBA has been working to address a number of promising issues including certification, sustainability, standardization, bioenergy promotion and debates about bioenergy’s impact on food, land use and water supply.*

*For more information, visit* [*www.worldbioenergy.org*](http://www.worldbioenergy.org)