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People across Globe Tell European Union: New Bioenergy Policies Must Protect Climate, Crops, Forests

‘International Day of Action on Bioenergy’ Galvanises Environmentalists, Citizens; Social Media Messages Call Upon Influential EU Commissioners to ‘Make it Right’; Campaign Reaches Nearly 1.5 Million People

BRUSSELS (October 20, 2016) – Environmental organisations today wrapped up a massive social media campaign that directed Twitter messages at two powerful European Commission members who this autumn are charged with helping overhaul crucial European Union bioenergy policies.

The messages originated from at least 29 countries across five continents and reached nearly 1.5 million people worldwide.

The sprawling social media action was part of the 19 October “International Day of Action on Bioenergy.” It was timed to influence an upcoming, high-stakes decision by the European Commission on a new EU bioenergy policy.

The messages shared a common demand: The EU must fundamentally change the way it treats burning wood and other biomass to generate energy so that bioenergy policies finally “protect our climate, crops and forests.” Contrary to their original intent, current EU policies and subsidies now result in distorted outcomes which actually harm biodiversity and worsen climate change.

Environmental groups and their allies rallied around the [#EUbioenergy](#) and [#SOSforests](#) hashtags. They focused a barrage of [messages](#) on two key decision-makers whose bioenergy policy positions are being closely monitored around the world – European Commission Vice President Maroš Šefčovič and Climate Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete.

Šefčovič, Cañete, and the European Commission must urgently fix flawed renewable energy policies that have failed to decrease carbon emissions effectively, precipitated an alarming spike in clear-cut logging of native Southeastern US forests, razed European forests and converted European grassland, the groups said. A new bioenergy policy that is based on the latest science and that better protects the environment is needed now, according to the groups.

Europe is perched on the front lines of industrial biomass expansion, so policy changes in Brussels have an outsized impact on the international biomass market. New EU bioenergy policies are expected as soon as early December.

Tweets supporting the International Day of Action on Bioenergy originated from the following countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Scotland, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, Vietnam, and Wales.

See here for a [photo](#) taken Wednesday in Brussels.

Participating organisations made the following statements:

“This isn’t just a European issue or a renewable energy issue,” said Debbie Hammel, director of NRDC’s Land Markets Initiative. **“This is a climate issue. Chopping down trees in the US to keep the lights on in Europe is not a clean energy solution. It hastens climate change and undermines international efforts to cut carbon now.”**

“EU’s taxpayers are funding bioenergy projects that are worsening global warming and destroying forests,” said Linde Zuidema, bioenergy campaigner at forest NGO Fern. **“To make its renewable policy credible, the EU should drastically limit its overall bioenergy use and prohibit the use of roundwood.”**

“We raise our voices today because we have already seen first-hand and up-close the negative impacts of the uncontrolled use of bioenergy. We want to see a policy that changes the ongoing destructive practices and outcomes. The new EU policy needs to put an end to burning trees and food for energy, and focus instead on using residues and waste biomass only, recognizing that these sources are limited. In the case of bioenergy the assumption that using more is better is wrong,” said Sini Eräjää, BirdLife Europe’s EU Bioenergy Policy Officer.

“It has become perfectly clear that bioenergy policies have had a negative impact on our forests, communities and climate and the EU Commission is in the position to fix this mistake,” said Adam Macon, Campaign Director at Dogwood Alliance. **“Today we stand with communities from around the world to deliver a clear message, the time is now to stop using our forests for fuel.”**

For more information on how harmful EU biomass policies are impacting the world, please see the following resources:

- NRDC’s report (released 17 October) [“Money To Burn: The U.K. Needs to Dump Biomass and Replace its Coal Plants with Truly Clean Energy.”](#)
- Organised by the Dogwood Alliance, dozens of local US elected officials earlier this month sent [this letter](#) to EU commissioners. The letter voices concerns over negative impacts EU bioenergy policies and associated subsidies have on US communities.
- Fern’s report (released 19 October) [“A Dangerous Delusion: How Europe’s sustainable forest debate distracts from a failing policy”](#) and an accompanying [opinion piece](#).
- Fern’s briefing note (released 18 October) [“Burning trees for energy is no solution to climate change.”](#)
- Joint NGO bioenergy sustainability [policy recommendations](#) for the EU (published September 2016).
- This [blog](#) tracks the latest EU bioenergy developments.