



**EBA**  
European Biogas Association

WORKSHOP REPORT

## WORKSHOP ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF BIOGAS

29 April 2014, Renewable Energy House, Brussels

European Biogas Association (EBA) welcomed an international group of stakeholders to its workshop in Brussels on 29 April to discuss questions related to sustainability of biogas feedstock and production. The topic is in the public eye since autumn 2012 when the European Commission published its so-called iLUC proposal for stricter sustainability criteria for biofuels – including biomethane in transportation. For the biogas sector it is of crucial importance that sustainability criteria and the methodology of greenhouse gas emission calculation are based on solid and peer-reviewed data that is applied for a long-term period bringing investment security.

Jan Stambasky, EBA's President, welcomed the participants by introducing the topic and EBA's views and policy recommendations. As a versatile source of renewable energy, biogas can be produced from a number of different substrates varying from biowaste to agricultural residues. Therefore, also the future sustainability criteria shall be well adapted to the industry's demands, i.e. biomethane should have uniform criteria, independent of its end use. Any sustainability criteria should thus apply to all sectors, transport, heat and power. Otherwise biomethane producers would face an impossible challenge dealing with different criteria for the same product that can be used as a source of electricity or transport fuel.

Andreas Pilzecker from the Commission's DG Energy gave a legislative update on biogas sustainability. Firstly, he underlined that the Commission has in general a very positive view about biogas. With regard to legislation, he explained that the Annex V of the Renewable Energy Directive is currently under revision. The updated version is expected to introduce new typical and default



**Above:** Jan Stambasky, EBA President, presenting the environmental benefits of biomethane as a transport fuel

**Below:** Andreas Pilzecker (EC DG ENER) giving an overview on the current EU legislation on biogas sustainability





greenhouse gas emission values for biogas and biomethane. A more comprehensive approach to emissions will be adopted taking into account inter alia feedstock transportation. As regards the iLUC proposal that is still under debate in the Council, silage maize shall be classified as a starch-rich crop subject to iLUC factors and the cap of first generation fuels whereas biomethane from source-separated municipal waste shall be counted twice toward the target of 10% renewable fuels in 2020.

Mr Pilzecker informed the audience that there will be no EU-wide sustainability criteria for biogas in heat and power sectors before 2020. Unfortunately, he also revealed that the Commission is still of the opinion that biomethane's emissions shall be compared to natural gas and not to the average EU fuel mix. This means that the requirement of reaching 60% greenhouse gas reduction in the future will be difficult to achieve because the fossil comparator, natural gas, is as itself already a low carbon fuel.

Vanya Veras from Municipal Waste Europe presented the huge potential that exists in the biowaste sector for biogas production. On average, each person in the EU generates 492 kg of municipal waste per year resulting in the overall amount of 260.5 million tons per year. The share of biowaste in the solid municipal waste is around 30% in the North of Europe and up to 60% in the South. Ms Veras explained that municipalities have an important role in promoting waste separation and raising awareness of its advantages.

The use of silage maize in the biogas production has often been the main concern when talking about the sustainability of biogas. Helmut Meßner who represents the German Maize Committee and the Confederation of European Corn Producers reported about a study that measured the environmental, social and economic compatibility of maize growing at German farms. The results prove that increasing amount of maize used as a rotational group increases energy efficiency through high yields and reduces GHG emissions accordingly.



**Above: and below:** snaps from the speakers and audience



The importance of sustainable agricultural practice was further discussed by Trees Robijns from BirdLife Europe. In this regard, she pointed out that sustainable biogas production must be energy efficient and it must take into account the preservation of the protected nature. In her concluding remarks, Ms Robijns emphasised that following best practices, biogas can be part of the solution in reaching energy savings. However, since available land for growing energy crops is limited, the sector should stronger focus on the potential of waste and agricultural residues.

Lastly, a life-cycle analysis of biogas production was provided by Jaqueline Daniel-Gromke from DBFZ. She explained that the European biogas leader, Germany, is currently facing rather qualitative than quantitative growth: in order to increase GHG savings, the German industry focuses now on increasing plant efficiency and control technology while investing in research and development of innovative new substrates.



Presentation by Jaqueline Daniel-Gromke (DBFZ)

After the lively discussions on the topic from different perspectives - policy, agriculture, industry, science, environment - EBA's President concluded the day by stating that the sustainability of biogas is a complex topic, which requires taking into account different factors from feedstock to sustainable agricultural practices. Due to its versatile nature, however, biogas represents by itself the concept of sustainability. The biogas production potential from biowaste, catch and cover crops, manure as well as other agricultural residues testify to industry's growing potential. Moreover, as workshop participants pointed out, bioenergy is clearly not the only reason causing indirect land use change: the other factors such as conversion of land to roads or logistics centres should be considered likewise.

### NEXT EBA WORKSHOPS:

15 OCTOBER IN BRUSSELS ON DIGESTATE

19 NOVEMBER IN BRUSSELS ON BIOMETHANE

### PRESENTATIONS AND PICTURES

- **EBA MEMBERS HAVE ACCESS TO THE PRESENTATIONS AND PICTURES IN THE MEMBERS SECTION OF THE WEBSITE**