

Sustainable agriculture and biogas: a need for review of EU-legislation

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The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted an own-initiative report by Csaba Sandor **TABAJDI** (PES, HU) on sustainable agriculture and biogas (the need for review of EU legislation).

The report recognises that biogas is a vital energy resource that contributes to sustainable economic, agricultural and rural development and environmental protection. It also stresses the contribution that biogas can make to reducing the European Union's energy dependence. Members encourage both the European Union and the Member States to exploit the huge potential in biogas by creating a favourable environment, as well as maintaining and developing support schemes to inspire investment in, and sustenance of, biogas plants.

The Commission and Member States are called upon to develop a coherent biogas-policy. In this context, Members ask the Commission to present a specific report on biogas and its promotion in Europe. This report outlines the necessary changes in Community and national law to facilitate further expansion of the biogas sector, pointing out the most efficient ways of using European funds and programmes as well as giving best practice examples. MEPs also ask, in this regard, for an assessment to be given of the impact of the various forms of biogas production on climate, the ecology of the landscape, rural incomes and worldwide food security.

This report promotes the **adoption of an EU-directive** on biogas production that should include the following elements:

- (a) specific targets for the priority use of manure, taking into account the agricultural conditions and the situation in the Member States;
- (b) annual statistics and reports on agricultural biogas production in order to be able to follow up on the targets;
- (c) measures for the construction and promotion of biogas-installations based on a national or regional impact assessment;
- (d) measures for the dissemination and promotion of results gained from prior experiences or demonstration projects need to be included in all plans; if regional and rural development regulations do not allow funding of such measures, they must be amended;
- (e) EU Member States should engage in national and regional planning in order to limit legal and administrative impediments, for instance natural gas or other fossil fuels should not be preferred in areas in which it is feasible to sell heat from biogas to local heating providers.

The European Commission is called upon to:

- present a proposal for a biowaste directive, which shall include quality standards;
- explore the possibility for a joint biogas and biowaste directive;
- present proposals for legislation on the use of residues from biogas installations;
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ensure that only organic material that allows residues to be used without endangering the environment may be used in biogas installations;

- ensure that the IPPC Directive, Nitrates Directives, Sewage Sludge Directive, Water Framework Directive, Birds Directive, Habitats Directive and the Heavy Metals legislation are enforced effectively in all Member States and regions, thereby making biogas installation based on manure and sludge more attractive;
- present as soon as possible a strategy to include biogas installations in the Kyoto-mechanism, for example through 'green certificates', special premiums or tax-credits for electricity and heat from biogas-installations;
- foster the feeding of biogas into natural gas networks by way of recommendations or a directive;
- to present its proposals for further enhancing the use of animal and agricultural crop by-products for biogas;
- ensure cooperation and coordination between the Member States so they may learn about each other's best practices with biogas plants;
- present a comprehensive report on European biogas production and future prospects in this area, including an impact assessment, to the European Parliament by 15 December 2008.