

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

2007/2107(INI) - 12/03/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted, by 606 votes to 24, with 12 abstentions, a resolution on sustainable agriculture and biogas and the need to review EU legislation in this area. The own-initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Csaba Sandor **TABAJDI** (PES, HU) on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

The resolution 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 EU's energy dependence on imports**. Members encourage both the EU and Member States to exploit the huge potential in biogas by creating a favourable environment, as well as developing support schemes to inspire investment in, and sustenance of, biogas plants.

Parliament discusses the environmental, energy-efficiency and sustainability implications of biogas. It emphasises that biogas from livestock manure has numerous environmental advantages. For biogas installations just as for livestock farms, sustainability and a size that is adapted to the particular region are essential if the environmental benefits are to also lead to greater acceptance of livestock farms, which encounter many problems due to an increased number of complaints from neighbours and the general public.

With regard to **economic viability**, Parliament reminds Member States and the Commission that further advancement of biogas is not possible without additional funding. It recalls that funding needs to be provided for research and development, for the promotion of results from specific projects, for installations and for the increased support of 'green electricity' and 'green gas'. Parliament urges the Commission and Member States to ensure that funds from EU and national programmes go to the most efficient and sustainable installations.

The Commission is asked to present a specific report on biogas and its promotion in the EU, outlining the necessary changes in Community and national law to facilitate further expansion of the biogas sector and pointing out the most efficient ways of using EU funds and programmes, while providing examples of best practices. Parliament also asks, in this regard, for an impact assessment of the various forms of biogas production on climate, the ecology of the landscape, rural incomes and worldwide security of food supply.

Parliament proposes that the promotion of biogas be fully included in the framework of the proposed Directive on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (see [COD/2008/0016](#)), with special emphasis on the following:

1. annual statistics and reports on agricultural biogas production in order to be able to follow up on the targets;
2. measures for the construction and promotion of biogas installations based on a regional and national;
3. 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;

4. provisions encouraging or requiring Member States to 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 generated from biogas to local heating providers.

The European Commission is called upon to:

- present 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;
- present a proposal for a biowaste directive, including quality standards;
- explore the possibility for a joint biogas and biowaste directive;
- present proposals for legislation on the use of residues from biogas installations;
- 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 installations based on manure and sludge more attractive;
- foster the feeding of biogas into natural gas networks by way of recommendations or a directive;
- 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 coherent report on European biogas production and future prospects in this area, including an impact assessment, to the European Parliament by 15 December 2008.