

The voice of European Bioenergy

## Reviving Abandoned Lands & Sustainably Managing Forests for Climate Resilience

Brussels, 7 November 2023 – *Bioenergy Europe [2023 Statistical Report Biomass Supply](#) and its [Policy Brief](#) released today presents the state of play of forest management and biomass feedstock in the European Union. European forests continue to grow while almost 15% of total EU land use is unused and/or abandoned.*

### Unused and abandoned lands

*"Abandoned areas in the European Union's former agricultural lands hold a promising opportunity for the EU to achieve its energy and climate goals" said Jean-Marc Jossart, Secretary General of Bioenergy Europe.*

Feedstocks for bioenergy are typically residues and waste products such as forest logging residues and byproducts from forest-based industries, agricultural residues from farming, and organic waste. The share of abandoned lands changes from country to country. The [Statistical Report on Biomass Supply](#) flagged Croatia (34,6%), Greece (28%) and Spain (25,4%) as the three countries with the highest rates of unused and abandoned land.

*"The potential in these areas is immense and can significantly contribute to the EU's renewable energy targets and efforts to combat climate change. Moreover, expanding bioenergy production can stimulate local economies by creating jobs in farming, forestry, and the bioenergy industry," continued Jossart.*

Countries with extensive forested areas such as Finland, Slovenia and Sweden have significant room for growth in bioenergy production and afforestation. Afforestation on abandoned lands can help increase carbon sequestration, mitigating climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and prevent further degradation of the land from erosion.

### Sustainable forest management

One of the key findings of the report is the potential for bioenergy production, primarily derived from forest biomass residues. Forest biomass represented more than 70% of the total biomass feedstock, with agricultural and waste biomass covering the remaining 30%. The [2023 Report on Biomass Supply](#) confirms that the amount of wood harvested in 2021 from European forest is less than what grows every year (around 63% of the net annual growth is being harvested at EU level).

Forests are being subjected to more stress due to climate change. The sharp rise in the cumulative burned area for 2022 is one particularly startling example. The only way to mitigate these dramatic events affecting forests is to reduce the risk factors by supporting their sustainable management, part of which consists in the removal of biomass. By removing excess biomass (fallen branches for example), the fuel available for the spread of wildfires is reduced.

*"The report shows the need for strategic planning and investment in underutilized areas and the need to sustainably manage forests. With the right incentives and sustainable practices, the EU can take*

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*significant steps toward achieving its renewable energy and sustainability targets, while simultaneously addressing land abandonment issues,”* concluded Jossart.

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### Notes to editors:

- [Bioenergy Europe](#) is the voice of the European bioenergy industry. It aims to develop a sustainable bioenergy market based on fair business conditions. Founded in 1990, Bioenergy Europe is a non-profit, Brussels-based international organisation bringing together more than 40 associations and 150 companies, as well as academia and research institutes from across Europe.
- Bioenergy Europe's [Annual Statistical Reports](#) provide insights on the development of the European bioenergy market in order to support industry leaders, decision-makers, investors and all bioenergy professionals to better understand the status of bioenergy in Europe. With more than 150 graphs and figures, readers can get an in-depth overview of the bioenergy sector in Europe.