

Fostering the biogas sector is essential to ensure the decarbonisation of the EU

Brussels, 11 June 2020 – Bioenergy Europe launches the second chapter of its Statistical Report 2020 focusing on biogas and its upgraded version, biomethane. The Report looks at the biogas consumption and production in the EU and provides an in-depth and up-to-date analysis on the sector's state of play.

Biogas is produced through the anaerobic digestion (AD) of agricultural residues, energy crops, sewage sludge and biodegradable wastes or captured from landfills. It is a versatile renewable fuel that can be used to produce heat, electricity or both in Combined Heat and Power plants. It can also be upgraded to biomethane, to be injected into the existing gas grid, used in industrial processes or as a transport fuel.

The European biogas market is well established and mature: biogas consumption has grown almost 26 times since 1990 reaching a total of 16.670 ktoe in 2018 from 18.802 plants. It represents about 1% of the total gross inland energy consumption of the EU-28. In addition, biomethane production – the upgrade version of biogas with CO₂ and impurities removed and ready for injection into the existing grid - has tripled since 2011, with up to 610 plants in 2018 in the EU, UK and EFTA countries and accounting for 1.959 ktoe, equivalent to 0,50% of the gas consumed in Europe. Considering the real potential of biomethane and the figures above, its market uptake remains a necessary condition to foster EU decarbonisation.

Despite being a stable and mature technology, its full potential is far from being exploited. Biogas is a flexible and renewable enabler of decarbonization and offers several environmental and socio-economic benefits. Efforts at EU and national levels should concentrate on how to fully promote the deployment of this technology through comprehensive incentives and supporting measures.

To decarbonise all economic sectors, a holistic approach to carbon pricing and the phasing out of subsidies for fossil fuels must accompany the uptake of renewables. This should be addressed in the Strategy for Smart Sector Integration and the Decarbonisation package.

These policies should be accompanied by set of procedures facilitating the injection of renewable methane into the gas grid: clear rules regulating the relationship between grid operators and biogas producers are important to enable its scaling-up.

The full deployment of biogas can create new business opportunities at local level and fosters the concept of circular and bio-based economy, in particular in rural areas. Biogas represents a profitable slurry management solution and energy and materials recovery in the waste treatment should be fully integrated in EU and national energy strategies.

Moreover, it offers a concrete solution to reduce emissions from manure and landfilling while limiting dependency on mineral-based fertilizers and critical raw materials such as phosphorous, drastically reducing the costs of operations and negative environmental effects.

Susanna Pflüger, Secretary General of the EBA. *“Biogas is ready to play a key role in helping Europe to make the transition to clean energy and carbon-neutrality by 2050 but we need aligned and technology-neutral policies as well as a clear commitment from the EU to green the gas supply”.*

Jean-Marc Jossart, Secretary General of Bioenergy Europe: *“The socio-economic benefits and environmental advantages of biogas and biomethane should be fully recognized and supported broadly. These renewable energy sources are of utmost importance to achieve climate targets but are also key to achieve a circular economy and promote local socio-economic development”.*

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