

Biomass Task Force

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To: Biomass contacts

Dear Colleagues,

Many of you will be aware of the 15 October launch of the Biomass Task Force led by Sir Ben Gill

This comes at a time when energy prices and availability have been prominent in the news with building concerns about the availability of sufficient energy to meet the needs of our increasingly energy hungry society. And concerns continue to build about climate change and the impacts of burning fossil fuels to meet energy needs.

Given this situation the examination of all other potential sources or renewable energy sources now achieves even higher importance. The work of the Biomass Task Force assumes an important part of delivering renewable and sustainable energy supplies. The Task Force will consider how best to optimise and demonstrate the potential of biomass energy.

Attached to this letter are the terms of reference for the study and a series of questions in respect of which the Task Force would welcome your input. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

David Clayton
Secretary to the Biomass Task Force

Task Force Members: Sir Ben Gill CBE (Chairman), John Roberts CBE, Nick Hartley

Task Force Secretary: David Clayton

Website: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/acu/energy/biomass-taskforce/index.htm>

BIOMASS STUDY TASK FORCE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Aim

To assist Government and the biomass industry in optimising the contribution of biomass energy to renewable energy targets and to sustainable farming and forestry and rural economy objectives.

Method

Identify possible measures to stimulate the development of biomass energy. Analyse the financial and broader economic costs and benefits of each recommendation.

Work with the energy, agricultural and forestry industries, potential users of biomass and other stakeholders to identify barriers in the supply chain and ways of overcoming them; this work includes direct encouragement and facilitation of co-operation within the supply chain and in Government and with relevant bodies such as RDAs.

Make recommendations to industry and public bodies.

- Notes:
- (1) The barriers in question are the current frailty of the supply chain, technical factors, planning restrictions and environmental factors relating to land use.
 - (2) The primary focus of the Study is on biomass (energy crops, forestry, agricultural plant and animal wastes) for heat and electricity generation. Biofuels for transport and other non food uses of crops may be considered in so far as cross-cutting issues arise.
 - (3) International comparisons should be included; this is likely to require some direct contact with other countries.
 - (4) The Study should take account inter alia of the RCEP report on biomass and the Government response, and assist Government in taking forward further analyses and actions established by that response (expected to be available by September 2004). The Study should involve contact with the National Non-Food Crops Centre, but take into account the limited role which the NNFCC currently has in the bioenergy field. The Study should also take account of any emerging findings from the biomass workstream of the Sustainable Energy Policy Network.
 - (5) The Study should not make recommendations on tax issues.

Reporting

The Study is commissioned by Government as a whole. The Study Team has open access to all relevant Departments and No 10 Downing Street.

The Secretariat of the Study will be located in Defra but drawing on expertise in other Departments and public and private bodies.

The work will report to Government via the Sustainable Energy Policy Network chaired by the Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry and for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

Structure of Task Force

Sir Ben Gill (leader of study)

John Roberts CBE, Chief Executive United Utilities - energy industry representative

Nick Hartley, Oxera - economist with knowledge of sector and environmental economics

Secretariat

The Secretariat for the Task Force is based at Central Science Laboratory in York. David Clayton is Secretary to the Study Team and is supported by Nikki MacLeod.

Contact details are:

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- david.clayton@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Timescale

12 month study from October 2004

Regular progress reports including a report in March 2005

Final report to include conclusions and analysis of outcomes achieved during the Study.

BIOMASS TASK FORCE

QUESTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

The Government has commissioned an external study to assist both itself and the biomass industry in optimising the contribution of biomass energy to renewable energy targets, as well as to sustainable farming, forestry and the rural economy.

The study team, led by Sir Ben Gill, will work with the energy, agricultural and forestry industries, potential users of biomass and other stakeholders to identify barriers in the supply chain and ways of overcoming them. Full details can be accessed at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/acu/energy/biomass-taskforce/index.htm>

To that end, it would be helpful to have views on the following questions:

What are the barriers that prevent the development of biomass energy in:

- the farming and forestry sectors
 - CAP support systems
- the supply chain (farm gate to end-use)
- setting up an end-use project (electricity, heat, CHP)
- technology development and use
- energy supply networks and charging systems
- economics of projects
- complexity of existing grant aid schemes
- lack of support for long term commitments in
 - regional/ local plans
 - users
 - producers

Are environmental impacts (at any stage in the process) a barrier or perceived to be a barrier?

What gaps exist in the support needed to develop projects?

Having identified the barriers we then need to know potential solutions to them from your perspective. Please feel free to give as many alternative or complementary solutions as you see appropriate with relevant weightings for your answers.

Are there international comparisons which the task force need to study? If you have international experience of biomass projects and their successes or failures please forward them.

**Responses should be sent to : David Clayton
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