
[The new trend: Large-scale bioenergy production from wood biomass](#)

In this issue of the WRM Bulletin we analyze the large-scale generation of energy from wood biomass. This is a new trend which, particularly in the European Union, involves the ever increasing use of wood as a means to meet “renewable energy” targets.

What was initially portrayed as an environmentally friendly way to take advantage of waste wood has rapidly turned out to be another large-scale process that requires growing consumption of wood. It has also led to the emergence of new energy market commodities, such as wood chips and wood pellets.

Up until now, the wood biomass demand has been largely met by North America (the United States and Canada). However, it has become increasingly evident that, as in the case of agrofuels, the generation of energy from wood biomass, within an unchanged model of production and consumption, is driving the expansion of monoculture plantations in the global South, specifically tree plantations of fast-growing species like eucalyptus.

The World Rainforest Movement (WRM) has produced a new report, “Tree plantations in the South to generate energy in the North: A new threat to communities and forests”, which will soon be published in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

In addition to presenting an overview of the subject, the report provides information on the promotion of bioenergy in Europe and examples of large-scale biomass projects in a number of European countries, such as biomass power plants in the United Kingdom, biomass use in Germany, Europe’s largest biomass tree plantation in Poland, wood biomass projections in Finland, and the potential demand in countries like Japan, South Korea, China and the United States. But the report also addresses the growing opposition to this new trend, especially in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. Often this opposition is spearheaded by community organizations concerned over the serious health impacts of wood-fired power plants, which produce high levels of air pollution, similar to those caused by coal-fired plants. In some cases, community groups have also become aware of the serious impacts of wood biomass energy with regard to forests, land and climate change, and have joined together with other local and national campaigns. Community opposition has succeeded in halting plans for biomass power plant construction on numerous occasions.

Knowing the importance of strengthening opposition struggles and alliances to fight back against this destructive and dangerous trend, WRM hopes this report will help raise awareness among organizations in the South and North around this new challenge. This edition of the bulletin offers a “preview” of the full report, in which the various facets of the issue are addressed in more detail (and the various sources consulted are fully cited).

