

IEA Bioenergy

WEBINAR SERIES

Bioenergy – is it good for the climate?



April 21, 2016

4 pm Central European Time

10 am Eastern Standard Time

12 am Australian Eastern Standard Time

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Presentation Summary:

Bioenergy is commonly considered to be “carbon neutral” because the carbon that is released during combustion has previously been sequestered from the atmosphere and will be sequestered again as the plants regrow. Under the Kyoto Protocol bioenergy is counted as carbon neutral in the energy sector because carbon stock changes due to harvest of biomass for energy are counted in the land use sector. However, incomplete coverage means that some emissions from bioenergy are overlooked in case of reduced carbon stock. Also, asynchrony between emissions and regrowth has led to concerns that bioenergy may not deliver climate benefits in the required time frame. Thus, some are expressing doubts about the climate benefits of bioenergy, and current accounting approaches. These assessments generally derive from a narrow perspective, focussed on a single forest stand, a short time frame, and a simplistic forestry model. Instead, quantifications of climate change impacts of forest bioenergy systems should consider the entire forest landscape and the specific conditions within which the forest system operates, long term as well as short term effects interactions between the energy sector and forest industry and how forest ecosystems are shaped by biophysical factors such as changing climatic conditions, human actions, and natural disturbances. Sustainable forest management principles are a precondition. Bioenergy has an important role in low-carbon energy systems of the future, particularly in achieving a net reduction of CO₂ levels in the atmosphere.

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