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Trust and legitimacy in governance of sustainability of bioenergy supply chains

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| Presenter | Maha Mansoor |
| Authors | Maha Mansoora, Inge Stupakb, Tat Smithc |
| Organizations | aYork University, bUniversity of Copenhagen, cUniversity of Toronto |
| Address | aIgnat Kaneff Building, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3 |
| E-mail | amaha.mansoor@mail.utoronto.ca |
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| *Abstract (250-400 words)*Public and private regulatory initiatives for the sustainability of bioenergy have emerged and take variety of forms, including public regulation, international processes, certification systems, best management practices and company policies. These systems aim at alleviating sustainability concerns, but despite high ambitions, recent discourse amongst civil society and academia questions if they can be authoritative and effective regulators of sustainability. Concerns are, for example, if the EU Renewable Energy Directive is adequately democratic, as third party countries are impacted by these regulations, but do not have access to influencing them. Debate also persists if standards are adequately comprehensive, if systems are effective and if they lack mechanisms for control and accountability. This creates uncertainty if both private and public institutions can be trusted as legitimate and effective regulators of sustainability of bioenergy, and, consequently, in the bioenergy sector. This paper proposes frameworks to describe, classify, and analyse sustainability governance systems, with a special focus to those developed for bioenergy and the bio-economy. It is the intent that such analyses of concrete supply chains can form a basis for discussions on how systems emerge and develop, and how they can develop in the future, for increased trust in their legitimacy and effectiveness. For this purpose, we define governance comprehensively to include public and private, mandatory and voluntary regulation. We first provide definitions of sustainability governance and input and output legitimacy, and, in relation to this, outline our conception of trust. Based on Bernstein and Cashore (2007), we propose how sustainability governance can be analysed as a multi-phase process, with phases separated by changes in drivers involving and granting of trust and legitimacy by actors through time. We suggest that in order to reach the final phase, there must be an increase in input and output legitimacy, and that description, classification, and analysis of their design is useful for moving forward. We offer an analysis framework for this purpose, which is based on McDermott et al. (2009). Finally, we consider how analysis of sustainability governance of bioenergy and the bio-economy can help improve the legitimacy of these systems, and which the challenges are in a broader and global context. |