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Save the Date: Southeast US wood pellet workshop: 1-3 May, in Athens, Georgia

Source: Dale et al. 2016; FIA-RPA, 2012

Adequacy of spatial databases for conducting Risk Assessments of sustainable wood sourcing practices of the U.S. industrial wood pellet industry supplying European energy demand

1 - 2 May 2019: Indoor technical workshop

3 May (half-day): Collaboration session -- BioSTAR proto-type visualization tool

University of Georgia, Athens, GA USA

Goal: Engage stakeholders to identify ways to improve data and data use for documenting sustainable forest management in wood pellet supply chains through the following.

Intended audience: Cross-section of wood pellet sector and society involved with and concerned about the governance of sustainable bioenergy feedstock supply chains and data required to conduct risk assessments – incl. forest landowners, wood pellet companies and energy producers, private, state and federal foresters, forest industry, state Natural Heritage organizations, public and private providers of spatial data for high conservation value habitats and organisms, academia, NGOs, forestry certification system staff, policy makers and the general public.

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Registration site to be available soon at: http://task43.ieabioenergy.com/

Background

European demand for wood pellets could grow from 13 million metric tonnes in 2017 to 20 million metric tonnes by 2020. Wood pellets sourced from the southeast U.S. are expected to provide a significant share of this growth. A variety of certification systems have been developed which contribute to providing 3rd party verification of European Union member states' sustainable sourcing requirements for pellets. The systems include Forest Management, Fiber Sourcing, and Chain of Custody certifications. Additionally, risk-based approaches to verify sustainable supplies from a plant's supply area have been developed. Risk-based approaches are important because it is unlikely that a large share of small, family-owned forests in the southeast U.S. will become individually certified.

Regional Risk Assessment (RRA) procedures have been developed by the Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP) for wood chip and pellet supply chains. As opposed to the usual plant-based approach, the regional approach intends to provide a geographically wider measure of assurance applicable to a defined jurisdiction or region. Companies in the region can then refer to the RRA rather than complete plant-specific risk assessments. Conducting an RRA has been discussed for southeastern U.S. And geographically broader procedures are already under implementation to verify low risk at a national level for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) controlled wood.

This workshop will present the findings of a study assessing the wood sourcing practices of the U.S. industrial wood pellet industry supplying European energy demand and discuss current state-of-art practices for conducting both company, regional and national level RAs and the adequacy of databases required for such assessments. Special focus will be on current and new opportunities to use spatial data for verification of sustainable forest management, including opportunities possibly offered by newer technologies.

Specific Objectives: The workshop aims to identify ways to improve data and data use for documenting sustainable forest management in wood pellet supply chains through the following.

- Review current wood sourcing practices and state-of-art practices for conducting company level and regional RAs of the U.S. industrial wood pellet industry supplying European bioenergy demand, based on the findings of a new study and company experiences.
- Identify new ways in which existing regional databases and data collected by use of new technologies can help conducting supply area, regional and national level risk assessment.
- Identify possible needs for improved or new data.
- Discuss alternative approaches to certifying wood pellet feedstock sourced from sustainably managed forests in the southeast U.S., such as group certification.
- Discuss proposals for improving the overall efficacy of Forest Management Unit (FMU) level, group and risk-based certification for all stakeholders associated with wood pellet supply chains to Europe and other developing regional markets.

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Draft Program - Indoor technical workshop and collaboration session

Wednesday	1 May	
12:00-1:00	Lunch	
1:00-1:15	Puneet Dwivedi	Welcome
1:15-1:30	Tat Smith	Overview of day 1
1:30-2:00	tbd	Shaping renewable energy policy to ensure bioenergy reduces carbon emissions and protects our land, water, and wildlife
2:00-2:30	Inge Stupak	Conceptual overview -- feasibility of FMU-level and risk-based certification for creating trust in sustainability of international wood pellet supply chains
2:30-3:00	Brian Kittler	Survey of the wood sourcing practices and sustainability policies of the U.S. industrial wood pellet industry supplying European energy demand
3:00-3:30	Break	
3:30-4:30	Panel discussion 3 speakers (Enviva, Drax, Georgia Biomass) plus discussion	How companies are documenting compliance with sustainability standards, including measuring biodiversity, tracking growth to drain, conserving high value ecosystems.
4:30-5:00	Discussion	State of art and opportunities for improvements through collaboration
5:00-6:30	Free time	
6:30-9:00	Banquet	William Strauss, President, FutureMetrics -- taking stock on the Georgia forestry sector and international wood pellet trade
Thursday	2 May	
7:30-8:45	Breakfast	
8:45-9:00	Puneet Dwivedi	Overview of day 2
9:00-9:30	Barry Graden	SFI fiber sourcing standard and small lands initiatives
9:30-10:30	tbd	FSC US -- risk assessment of forest regions
10:30-11:00	Break	
11:00-11:30	Forestry certification auditor	US perspective on auditing practices of FMU-level and risk-based approaches to certification of sustainable forest management
11:30-12:00	tbd	NepCon -- implementation of risk-based verification, as developed for legality in the European Timber Regulation, FSC controlled wood and SBP, and possible needs for improvement.
12:00-1:00	Lunch	
1:00-1:30	Grant Domke	USDA Forest Service – The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program data for carbon accounting
1:30-2:00	tdb	NatureServe -- wildlife conservation data and tools
2:00-3:00	Panel	Technology today and tomorrow. Experts (companies, universities, etc.) with current and developing technologies

	3 speakers plus discussion	to discuss what is available today, how it's being used, and what is in development (what we can expect in the next 10-20 years). Consider: mapping/GIS applications; remote-Sensing LIDAR; satellite technologies; drones; etc.
3:00-3:15	Break	
3:15-4:00	Breakout session	Facilitated discussion
4:00-5:00	Panel discussion	Discussion of opportunities to encourage collaboration, find common ground and develop trust
5:00	Puneet Dwivedi	Farewell
Friday	**3 May**	
8:30-12:00	Esther Parish & Keith Kline	Collaboration Session -- Explore Oak Ridge National Laboratory's (ORNL's) recent sustainability case study of two Southeast US wood pellet supply areas using a proto-type visualization tool called the Bioenergy Sustainability Tradeoffs Assessment Resource (BioSTAR).

May 3rd Collaboration Session – *Exploring the costs and benefits of SE US wood pellet production with ORNL's proto-type visualization tool (BioSTAR)*

Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) is developing a web-based Bioenergy Sustainability Tradeoffs Assessment Resource (BioSTAR) to help the US Department of Energy's BioEnergy Technologies Office (DOE BETO) and industry holistically quantify costs and benefits and analyze tradeoffs of US biomass production options. By helping users tailor assessments to local conditions and stakeholder priorities, BioSTAR aims to identify options that will maximize environmental and socioeconomic benefits to US society (e.g., improvement of water and soil quality, net increase in value-added processing and jobs) while minimizing negative impacts.

Through collaboration with the USDA Forest Service (USFS), ORNL recently assembled a variety of datasets and estimated changes in indicators of sustainable production for two forested landscapes supplying over half of US industrial wood pellets to an established export market: the Chesapeake fuelshed supplying the ports of Norfolk, VA, and the Savannah fuelshed supplying the ports of Savannah, GA.

For this collaboration session, we invite interested stakeholders to engage with a prototype of the BioSTAR tool to explore the sustainability indicator datasets assembled for these two case-study areas. Our goal is to understand how different users prioritize indicators and assess potential tradeoffs between them. Getting feedback on BioSTAR's utility and ease of use will help ORNL to refine and improve this multimetric visualization platform for future decision makers.

Workshop venue: University of Georgia, Athens, GA USA

Registration details: Forthcoming on events websites for IEA Bioenergy (https://www.ieabioenergy.com/) and IEA Bioenergy Task 43 'Biomass Feedstocks for Energy Markets' (http://task43.ieabioenergy.com/).