

Biomass

What is Biomass?

Biomass fuels are derived from living, usually plant-based material. The aim of using them is to reduce our dependence on scarce and increasingly expensive fossil fuels and give us a more sustainable, lower carbon economy.

At its current level, the biomass industry can play an effective part in the 'cascade model', where every part of a harvested tree is used. Biomass is a good outlet for marginal sources of wood, such as thinnings taken from the trees, while larger and smaller logs are used for furniture/construction and fencing/packaging and pallets, respectively.



However, as the number of biomass power plants increases, it will increase demand for wood dramatically. European governments are encouraging the use of biomass fuels with subsidies. This artificial support for the sector will push the price of timber up – possibly to more than double current levels - diverting supplies of solid timber away from manufacturing, to be used as fuel.

Biomass & Climate Change

When solid timber is used as fuel instead of being used to manufacture a product, it shortens the lifespan of the wood - and releases the carbon stored within it back into the atmosphere. When the wood is used to make products such as pallets and packaging it stores the carbon for longer, possibly up to a decade more.

Recovering energy from end-of-life wood pallets and packaging is an excellent replacement for fossil fuels and ensures the carbon in the wood is used for its best effect.

Wooden pallets and packaging companies support the sensible move towards biomass fuels. However, heavy subsidies to the biomass industry will damage European manufacturing and is also worse for the environment.

