



## Biomass Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is biomass?

A: Biomass refers to organic materials used as an energy source. In most cases, this refers to wood pellets manufactured from whole trees, tops and limbs, and saw mill residues. Q: We need jobs and development. Won't this industry be economically beneficial? A: No. Wood pellet facilities require a small number of highly skilled positions. These facilities often hire outside of the community to bring in the experience needed. While, each traditional timber industry job creates 2-3 additional jobs in the regional economy, the wood pellet industry provides only 1 additional job for each job in a pellet facility. Shifting from traditional wood industries to the wood pellet industry would result in a decline in employment in the forest products sectors that spawn the most jobs. Additionally, the industry is uneconomical compared to true renewables. European policymakers are currently subsidizing wood pellets. As they shift to true renewable energy, these subsidies will dry up leaving local tax payers to fill the gap.

Q: Shouldn't private landowners be able to benefit from their land?

A: Trees from bottomland hardwood forests and forested wetlands represent a high value from an ecosystem services perspective (water, flood protection, carbon sequestration, etc.). Wood pellets and biomass represent the lowest value for landowners, providing only a few dollars per ton of wood. Landowners who choose to manage their forests for wood products, would get a much greater return on saw timber with a lighter touch on the environment.

Q: Aren't there regulations that protect forests?

A: Privately held forests make up nearly 90% of forested land in the Southern US where forestry on private land is conducted with little to no regulations on most fundamental forestry practices. Large-scale clearcutting is routine. No laws or regulations protect old growth forests or endangered forests, and conversion of natural forest ecosystems to plantations is permitted, as is in most cases logging of wetlands. Widespread use of toxic chemicals and fertilizers are permitted. No southern state requires limiting the cumulative impact of logging operations, and removals of forests exceed growth in several parts of the region.

Q: Doesn't the pellet industry rely almost exclusively on residues from existing logging operations?

A: Evidence demonstrates the opposite: Multiple independent investigations have revealed the industry to be sourcing whole trees expressly for biomass, and in many cases from some of the most ecologically sensitive areas in the world. Moreover, the projected growth in the Southern pellet industry cannot be sustained by using only residues that are secondary to logging. By the close of 2015, the Southern US was shipping almost 6 million tons of wood pellets.

Q: Isn't this industry better than coal?

A: In some cases, burning wood for fuel is actually worse than coal. Trees, because of their high moisture content, contain less potential energy per unit of carbon emissions than coal and other fossil fuels, so you need to burn many more trees to produce the same amount of energy. This results in 40 percent more carbon emissions at the smokestack per unit of energy generated. Secondly, cutting down trees for energy production disrupts vital carbon sinks and impedes ongoing forest carbon sequestration—not just on the forest floor, but deep down in the soil. From the perspective of the atmosphere, diminishing a carbon sink has the same impact as creating an equivalent-sized smokestack.

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