

Press Release, Copenhagen, 14th September

Biomass Power off!
**International Protest Against Biomass Industry Lobby Conference in
Copenhagen this Wednesday**

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Photo opportunity:

Wednesday, 15th September, 9am outside Hotel Scandic Copenhagen, Vester Søgade 6, 1601, Copenhagen

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On Wednesday, 15th September, European environmental campaign groups are holding a protest against the “Biomass PowerON“ conference being held in Copenhagen [1], to denounce the large-scale burning of forest wood and the greenwashing of this destructive industry. On behalf of an international network against the burning of wood in energy systems, activists from NOAH Friends of the Earth Denmark and Global Aktion (Denmark), ROBIN WOOD (Germany) and Biofuelwatch (UK) will demonstrate in front of the main entrance of the industry conference hotel in central Copenhagen. Furthermore, activists are planning to hand a “Burning Wood Award” to one of the companies involved in the biomass industry and the conference.

Industry and policymakers are seeking to expand the burning of forest biomass as a contribution to the coal phaseout and their response to the escalating climate crisis, despite the serious harm it causes to forests, climate and public health.

The EU's own research institute, the JRC, has no doubt that burning biomass is harmful to the climate and biodiversity. But at the same time, industry and politicians continue to work to increase the burning of wood biomass, presenting it as a solution to the coal phase-out and the worsening climate crisis.

Across the EU, forest wood already accounts for 37% of all energy classed as renewable, more than wind, solar, tidal, wave and geothermal energy combined.[2] the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands have been at the forefront of burning wood in coal plants. In Germany, a decision about a large new increase in forest wood burning, this time to convert coal plants, is imminent.

“The Biomass PowerON conference brings together energy companies with biomass suppliers. They will be networking over coffee and cake to enter into new lucrative deals which will harm the climate. This industry profits from huge subsidies for the logging and burning of forests and tree plantations. At the same time, such public funds are not available to support climate friendly wind- and solar power. Hundreds of scientists have been warning against such an approach. We, too demand an end to such climate damaging policies”, says Bente Hesselund from NOAH.

The conference will feature some of the largest players in the forest biomass industry, with speeches by the Danish energy companies Høfor and Ørsted as well as Drax Plc., who are operating the world’s largest biomass power plant in England. Ørsted as well as Drax are importing large quantities of wood pellets from precious forests in Estonia, Latvia and the Southeastern USA.

Siim Kuresoo from [Estonian Fund for Nature](#) warns about the impacts of pellet exports from his country to Ørsted, Drax and other energy companies: "With Estonia seeing a strong rise in clear-cuts, from which even the most valuable old forests aren't safe,

there is no way wood pellets and wood chips made here could be seen as a tool in the fight against environmental problems.“

Heather Hillaker from the Southern Environmental Law Center in the US says: „Drax and Ørsted both rely on wood pellets produced by Enviva in the southeast U.S.—wood pellets which are made from whole trees, often from clearcuts of mature forests within an area identified as a global biodiversity hotspot. Not only does this degrade our forests and their wildlife habitat, but air pollution and dust from wood pellet production also harms the health of local communities. This industry is far from clean.“

The Danish energy provider Høfor procures some of its woodchips from the Brazilian state of Amapá in the Amazon region. Høfor’s Brazilian supplier, Amcel, operates eucalyptus plantations in the state. Those were established at the expense of small farmers, many of whom have been trying for years to recover their lands, according to Father Sisto Magro, a member of the Pastoral Land Commission CPT and human rights activist. Father Sisto Macros has warned that Brazilian wood exports to Denmark play into the hands of President Bolsonaro and his programme of forest destruction.[3]

Mirroring past developments in Denmark, energy companies in Germany such as Onyx and EnBW, as well as the world’s biggest pellet producer, Enviva and industry lobby groups like the “Forum for Sustainable Wood Energy” are lobbying for public subsidies to convert coal plants to wood pellets instead of having to shut them down. Such investments would maintain an energy supply based on combustion technology - and thus lead to high emissions from burning far into the future. Investments should instead only be used to expand energy supply with emission-free technologies such as geothermal or solar and wind power.

“We cannot allow greenwashing the harm which large-scale industrial wood burning causes to forests, climate and biodiversity. Biomass burning is not compatible with environmental or climate justice. Instead of lobbying and greenwashing events such as the one in Copenhagen, we demand greater efforts to protect forest, and a climate just energy transition”, says Jana Ballenthien of ROBIN WOOD.

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News about the action tomorrow also on Twitter: @robin_wood, @noah_dk

Photos of the action you will find tomorrow in the course of the morning:
www.robinwood.de, <https://noah.dk/>

Notes:

[1] fortesmedia.com/biomass-poweron-2021,4,en,2,1,12.html

[2] op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d557041f-11be-11eb-9a54-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-166348766

[3] wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/organized-land-theft-for-industrial-tree-plantations-in-brazil-the-case-of-amcel/

Other sources:

Study by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre(JRC), January 2021:
forestdefenders.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/JRC-study-biomass-study-overview_final.pdf

Open Letter by 500 scientists to President Biden and other heads of state:
<https://www.woodwellclimate.org/letter-regarding-use-of-forests-for-bioenergy/>

Websites of the NGOs participating in the protest:

ROBIN WOOD: www.robinwood.de

NOAH: <https://www.noah.dk/>

Biofuelwatch: <https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/>