

PRESS RELEASE

Wood Panel Industry Supports European Day of Action Against Unfair Subsidies

WPIF and member companies in the UK and Ireland are uniting with panel manufacturing companies across Europe in a day of action being promoted by the European Panel Federation in protest against subsidies being given for biomass energy. Across Europe, wood is the preferred fuel of biomass generators.

Being held on Friday 29th October, companies across Europe are co-ordinating actions to draw attention to the impacts that the unfair subsidies to biomass energy will have on the wood panel industries and to highlight that the burning of wood should only occur at the end of its useful life, thereby maximizing the carbon storage and economic potential of this valuable resource.

Alastair Kerr, Director-General of the Wood Panel Industries Federation says “WPIF has been highlighting the threats to the industry from the subsidy regime in the UK through its ‘Make Wood Work’ campaign but this is a problem that is mirrored across Europe. Wood panel manufacturing companies and other wood processing companies are seeing wood prices being driven up and are experiencing shortages in supply of their primary raw material. The day of action will see companies taking symbolic stoppage time and/or holding events with MPs, MEPs and the media”.

Studies indicate that there could be a shortage of up to 400 million m³ of wood in Europe by 2020 due to the demands of biomass. (FAO/UNECE/University of Hamburg)

Kerr added “It should be obvious, but legislators across Europe are failing to appreciate the carbon storage potential of wood and wood products. Allowing wood to be burnt before the end of its useful life is a waste and risks damaging the environment as well as displacing a ‘green’ industry and the many thousands of jobs that rely upon it.”

To avoid squandering such a valuable material and harming a vital industry, a balanced approach is required says Kerr, “whereby the principles of hierarchy of use are embedded in energy policy and due consideration is given to the size and location of energy projects and the sustainability of their fuel”.

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Note to Editors

About The Wood Panel Industries Federation (WPIF)

The WPIF represents the wood panel manufacturing sector in the UK and Ireland which occupies ten sites and supplies approximately 60% of the UK demand for wood-based panels. Each of these sites is a major player in the local economy; most with workers from within a small catchment area, and in many cases provide employment to a number of members of the same family. There are four manufacturing companies based in the UK :

- Egger (UK) Limited in employs 575 people across two sites at Hexham, Northumberland, Barony, Ayreshire
- Kronospan Limited in Chirk, Clywd, employs 600 people
- Norbord Limited employs 988 people across three sites at South Molton , Devon ; Cowie, near Stirling and Dalcross near Inverness
- Sonae in Knowsley, Merseyside, employs 225 people

Manufacturing Companies in Ireland:

- Medite Europe Ltd, Clonmel (Part of the Coillte Panel Products Group)
- Smartply Europe Ltd, Waterford (Part of the Coillte Panel Products Group)
- Finsa Forest Products, Scarriff.

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The European Panel Federation (EPF) represents the European manufacturers of particleboard, MDF and OSB from 29 countries. The sector includes more than 180 factories- which are mostly located in rural areas. In 2009 the industry produced 34.6 million m³ of particleboard, 12.2 million m³ of MDF and 3.3 million m³ of OSB, generating a turnover € 25 billion. Contact: Kris Wijnendaele, Secretary General.

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