



Media Release

Date 19 August 2009

Wood biomass: a clean, green renewable energy source

The National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) calls on the Australian Government and Opposition to get serious about renewable energy and fully recognise the opportunities provided by wood biomass in the Renewable Energy Target legislation.

“The current legislation fails to fully include the use of biomass from forestry wood waste for electricity generation effectively ruling out a resource that could reduce Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions by 3 million tonnes each year,” said NAFI CEO Allan Hansard.

“We have heard a lot about the potential of wind, solar and even coal seam methane as renewable sources of energy but what has been missing or ignored in this debate so far is the key role wood biomass from Australia’s sustainably managed native forests and plantations can play in assisting Australia to meet its renewable energy target and place the economy on a low emissions path.

“In fact the recognition of wood biomass as a renewable energy source has been clearly missing from the rhetoric on renewable energy in Australia. Australia is not keeping pace with the new science on this issue and as a result is being left behind by the rest of the developed world.

“International scientists on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007 and the IUCN endorsed Forests Dialogue 2008, states that the largest carbon sequestration benefit from forests is produced by the long term sustainable management of forests for timber, fibre and energy production.

“Australia already lags behind many other developed nations in terms of using renewable wood waste for energy generation. The European Union, Canada and USA generate a significant amount of electricity and heat from renewable resources; in Europe over two-thirds of this comes from biomass, most of which is wood waste from forestry.

“Broadly speaking, in Europe and North America the only limitation on the use of wood biomass fuel for renewable energy is sustainability of forest management. Australia’s renewable, sustainable forest industry is managed to world’s best practice standards of environmental management. The use of wood waste for renewable energy generation would not result in a single extra tree being harvested; it would simply mean more effectively using what is now being treated as waste.

“We would like to see the Greens support this as the use of wood biomass for electricity and heat generation is supported by many of their European colleagues, such as the WWF, where much of this wood biomass comes from sustainably managed production native forests.

“Wood-waste based renewable energy could provide as much as 7 percent of the Australian Government’s 2020 renewable energy target and generate an estimated \$800 million in direct investment and create 2300 sustainable jobs, many of which will be in rural and regional communities

FOREST INDUSTRIES HOUSE, DEAKIN, CANBERRA

Ph (02) 6285 3833 Fax: (02) 6285 3855 Email: jane.heffernan@nafi.com.au Internet: www.nafi.com.au

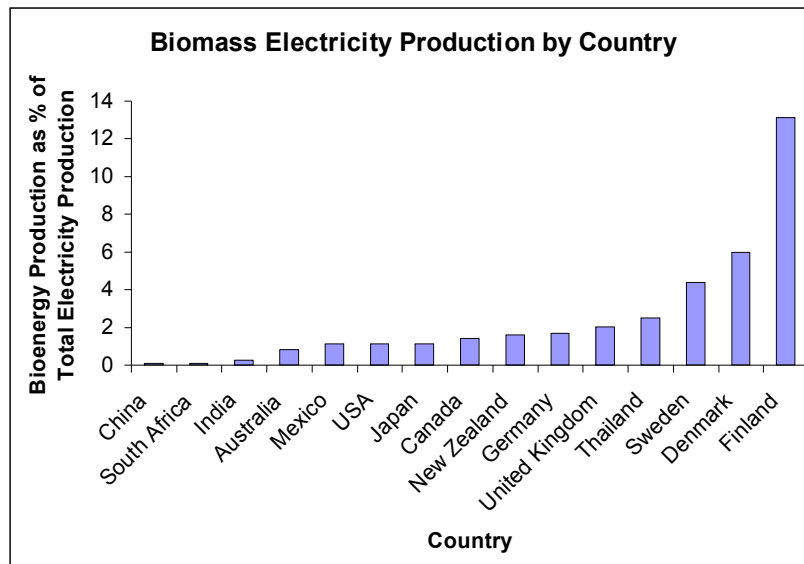
“This positive triple bottom line outcome differentiates renewable wood biomass from many other forms of renewable energy, which don’t provide the ongoing, sustainable employment opportunities provided by Australia’s renewable forest industry.

“However, the draft legislation currently does not allow for this opportunity to be realised.

“Without amendments to fully include forestry wood waste this legislation will severely limit the ability of the forest industry to provide positive climate change outcomes in the bioenergy sector and will have a negative impact on investment in renewable energy technology, innovation and infrastructure in Australia.

“NAFI will continue to work with the Australian Government and the Coalition to ensure the renewable energy legislation provides the best possible outcomes for Australia’s economy and environment.”

The following table demonstrates how Australia compares with other countries on the use of biomass electricity production.



Biomass electricity production by country (Data sourced from the International Energy Agency, www.iea.org).

[ENDS]

Media contact: Jane Heffernan **0419 465 328** or **02 6285 3833** Jane.heffernan@nafi.com.au