



Italy leads the G8 to conclude the Global Bioenergy Partnership

One of the objectives of the last G8 Plan of Action for energy - the Gleneagles Plan of Action - has been achieved with the launch, in May 2006, of the Global Bioenergy Partnership, which aims to support wider, cost effective biomass and biofuel deployment.

Background

In the context of declining fossil fuel resources and increasing greenhouse gas emissions, biomass is a potential way to contribute to environmental preservation. As a consequence, in the Gleneagles Plan of Action, the G8 leaders agreed to launch a Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP), on the basis of an Italian initiative. The text reads:

"We [the G8] will promote the continued development and commercialisation of renewable energy by: [...] (d) launching a Global Bioenergy Partnership to support wider, cost effective, biomass and biofuel deployment, particularly in developing countries where biomass use is prevalent, following the Rome International Workshop on Bioenergy".

The partners

In order to comply with this G8 commitment, the Global Bioenergy Partnership was launched on 11th May 2006 with a signing ceremony of the "Terms of Reference" of the Partnership. All G8 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, U.S.A.), China, Mexico, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), International Energy Agency (IEA), United Nations Foundation and European Biomass Industry Association (EUBIA) are the Partners of the GBEP.

Objectives and method

The Global Bioenergy Partnership will provide a framework for ensuring a better coordination of ongoing activities on the issue of bioenergy, as well as a more efficient use of the financial and technical resources involved. The potential competition for land use, e.g. with environmental and agricultural uses, has been foreseen and addressed with the proposed inclusion in the Steering Committee of nature conservation and agriculture experts. Furthermore, the involvement of the Developing Countries will be particularly important where biomass use is prevalent and whose experience could be transferred to countries, developed and developing, where the use of biomass is still at a first stage. This will increase and facilitate an exchange of experiences and technologies not only North-South, but also South-South and South-North.

Organisation and first actions

A Steering Committee and a Secretariat will be established. Each Partner will choose its participation in the Partnership. Although the working plan is not yet established, the draft methodology and first actions are displayed in the Terms of Reference. Activities will include workshops, seminars and experts meetings. Studies, methodologies and tools should be developed. The short-mid term goals include the review of the current stakeholders network, knowledge and gaps in the understanding about bioenergy as well as the formulation of standard guidelines to measure the greenhouse gas emission reductions through the use of biofuels.

Hopefully this new international partnership will help promote the development of greener energies thanks to integration of existing schemes and enhanced cooperation between international partners. This synergy should open up new markets for European industries in developing countries, but also enable them to benefit from the experience of countries that already use biomass energy on a large scale.

For more information:

- G8 Gleneagles Plan of Action mentioning the Global Bioenergy Partnership, available on:
http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/PostG8_Gleneagles_CCChangePlanofAction.pdf
- White Paper on the Global Bioenergy Partnership, prepared by the Italian Ministry for the Environment and Territory with the participation of the Imperial College of London and the Italian Biomass Association.
http://www2.minambiente.it/sito/settori_azione/pia/docs/roundtable_09_12_2005/white_paper.pdf
- GBEP Terms of Reference, signed on 11 May 2006
http://www2.minambiente.it/Sito/settori_azione/pia/docs/GBEP_11_05_2006.pdf

