Removing barriers for biogas in a circular agro-economy

Venue of the Workshop: Representation of Lower Saxony to the EU
*Rue Montoyer 61, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium*

16 February 2016, 12.45 -17.00

*For further information and registration: www.sustainable-biomass.eu/final-workshop-BIOGAS #BIOTEAMGAS2016*

In the aftermath of the successful COP21/CMP11 conference in Paris, boosting a *green growth* in the EU economy poses a political and policy challenge in terms of enhancing competitiveness, while at the same time creating new jobs and fostering environmental sustainability. Within the EU, a special role has been given to the Circular Economy Strategy. The strategic package recently adopted by the European Commission aims at closing the loop among these objectives in the most cost-effective way, by extracting the maximum value from primary and secondary raw materials and introducing a new paradigm for the use of resources.

The agricultural sector is an excellent testing bed for the Circular Economy, traditionally open to the culture of cascading use and cost-effective solutions. A more circular agro-economy entails more efficient use of natural resources, while reducing the environmental impacts to a minimum level. While cost-effective technological solutions are available to combine the production of biogas with the production of organic fertilizers, and with that the recycling of valuable soil components, the market and policy conditions in the EU are not always fostering such activities.

The event is focused on discussing the policy reform necessary to foster EU-wide the adoption of more sustainable agricultural practices; where state of the art biogas systems are seen as an integrated element of the circular-agro economy and not only as a renewable energy option. The potential positive outcomes are clear: the production of renewable energy and organic fertilizers that might generate additional revenues for farmers, the effective action against the nitrogen-leakage into ground water and nitrogen-based secondary air pollution, methane emissions and phosphate recycling. But the road towards such a future, uncertain.

The event addresses bio-economy operators, associations, policy makers and professionals and aims at discussing the barriers and the challenges for the development and innovation of the biogas sector in a number of EU Member States (Finland, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Poland and The Netherlands).

A strong engagement of relevant stakeholders and a qualified platform discussion will support the twofold ambition of this event. The first objective is to support policy makers of the EC in their current task to activate the Circular Economy Package in agriculture at the grass root level. The second objective is to collect ideas and implementation strategies to unlock the commercial potential of combined production of biogas and organic fertilizers in an EU-wide market.
Programme

12.45 Registration of participants

13.00 Networking lunch

14.00 Welcome and opening remarks
Chair: Daniele Russolillo, Fondazione per l'Ambiente – Turin School of Local Regulation

“The transition to a more circular economy, where the value of products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste minimised, is an essential contribution to the EU’s efforts to develop a sustainable, low carbon, resource efficient and competitive economy” - from the EU action plan for the Circular Economy

14.10 What is the role of biogas production in the Circular Economy?
Opening statements by:
- Nicolas de la Vega, European Biogas Association
- Dominique Dejonckheere, COPA*COGECA
- Chris Thornton, European Sustainable Phosphorous Platform

14.30 Barriers for biogas in the Circular Economy; findings from the BIOTEAM project
- Biogas plant optimization in Germany, Finland and the Netherlands, Lars Lauven, Georg-August University, Göttingen, Germany
- Barriers for biogas and nutrient recycling in Lithuania and Finland, Vita Tilvikiene, Lithuanian Research Centre for Agriculture and Forestry - Taija Sinkko, Natural Resources Institute Finland
- Barriers for biogas, biomethane and digestate in Italy, Daniele Russolillo, Fondazione per l'Ambiente – Turin School of Local Regulation
- Barriers for biogas production and nutrient recycling from animal manure in the Netherlands, Eise Spijker, JIN Climate and Sustainability

16.00 How to realise the market potential for combined production of biogas and organic fertilizers? Platform discussion coordinated by Eise Spijker, JIN Climate and Sustainability

Discussants: Nicolas de la Vega, European Biogas Association - Dominique Dejonckheere, COPA*COGECA - Chris Thornton, European Sustainable Phosphorous Platform - DG Energy (to be confirmed) - DG Environment (to be confirmed)

Some of the platform questions:
- Are current RES subsidy regimes strong enough to reach the biogas potential?
- Can we create a viable EU market for recycled nutrients?
- Who can/will/should invest in biogas production and nutrient recycling?
- Can we improve synergies between key policy frameworks (Soil, Air, Climate, Renewables)?

17.00 Concluding remarks

The workshop is promoted by IEE Project BIOTEAM, whose partners are: