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## **Biomass residues are a valuable sustainable energy source**

By Donna Harman, President & CEO, American Forest & Paper Association - 06/12/13 01:41 PM ET

A report on greenhouse gas emissions earlier this week by the International Energy Agency will have policymakers once again discussing sustainable energy options. Reasons for this renewed interest range from energy security to protection of our natural resources. Paper and wood products manufacturers have long known the benefits of using biomass residues to produce energy and, in optimizing its use, have reduced greenhouse gas emissions 10.5 percent since 2005, with a goal to reach 15 percent by 2020.

The carbon cycle is nature's way cleaning the air. As forests grow, they remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere via photosynthesis. That carbon dioxide will later be released as trees die or woody residues decay. But that same carbon can also be released as the biomass is combusted, generating energy while adding no more carbon than would otherwise have naturally been released. This is an opportunity to take advantage of energy value that would otherwise be lost to the atmosphere.

Biomass is helping to power one of the most significant manufacturing sectors of the U.S. economy. The forest products industry accounts for approximately 4.5 percent of all U.S. manufacturing GDP, generating approximately \$200 billion in products annually and employing nearly 900,000 Americans. Paper and wood products manufacturing facilities produce 70 percent of the renewable biomass energy used by the entire manufacturing sector in the U.S. And on average, paper and wood products manufacturers meet about two-thirds of their energy needs from renewable biomass residues that would have decayed anyway, releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. By using these residues as fuel, we're capturing the energy value while reducing the use of fossil fuel that would otherwise be needed to power our manufacturing facilities.

Given the science behind the sustainable carbon cycle and the obvious benefits of biomass-based energy, particularly that resulting from residues, federal policies should not choose winners and losers among renewable, sustainable energy sources. Where state or federal government policies exist, those policies must treat existing industry energy generation from biomass equally with newly-created renewable energy generation, promote sustainable forest management, and provide incentives for reliable and affordable regional fiber supplies rather than a particular use while maintaining open market access.

The forest products industry voluntarily supports the sustainable nature of biomass. In the United States, more wood is grown than is harvested for forest products. This sustainable forest resource enables AF&PA member companies to make products essential for everyday life from a renewable and recyclable resource and also to produce renewable biomass energy through highly-efficient combined heat and power technology. The industry has also committed to continuous improvement through our sustainability initiative, Better Practices, Better Planet 2020. As our biennial Sustainability Report shows, we have made significant progress on the initiative's six key goals: increasing paper-recovery for recycling; improving energy efficiency; reducing greenhouse gas emissions; promoting sustainable forestry practices; improving workplace safety; and reducing water use.

As the debate about energy options warms up again, it's time that federal policies recognize the forest products industry's contribution to sustainable manufacturing in America and how our

unique use of biomass residues in energy production contributes more broadly to our country's energy profile.

*Donna Harman is president and chief executive officer of the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) and is recognized by industry leaders and policymakers alike as one of the leading experts on public policy concerning the pulp, paper, packaging, and wood products manufacturing industry.*

Read more: <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/energy-a-environment/305075-biomass-residues-are-a-valuable-sustainable-energy-source-#ixzz2XFpnx2oT>

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