Unlock the potential of renewable, bio-based materials for a Circular Economy

Europe’s businesses strongly depend on the supply of raw materials that are mainly produced outside the EU. Replacing finite materials with materials from renewable, bio-based sources helps sustain material supply, addresses resource scarcity, contributes to Europe’s environmental ambitions, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and strengthens the resilience and competitiveness of the European economy.

Thus, an EU circular economy policy should equally promote the use of materials from renewable, bio-based sources and increased recycling of products. However, the Commission’s proposals fall short of fully realising the potential of bio-based materials within a circular economy.

The signatories strongly encourage

- Recognizing and incentivizing the use of bio-based, renewable materials as an essential solution for a true circular economy when implementing the Commission’s Action Plan.

- Extending this logic to the legislative proposals under the EU Circular Economy Package, in particular for sectors where solutions are already available, e.g. packaging. The use of materials from renewable sources should be recognised and incentivised in the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD) (94/62/EC). This can be done by amending the PPWD with the explicit requirement for Member States to encourage the use of bio-based materials for the manufacturing of packaging, where appropriate.

A clear definition of ‘bio-based’ would ensure coherent interpretation and a level-playing field for producers. We recommend using the existing definition from the CEN Technical Committee 411\(^1\), which defines ‘bio-based’ as “derived from biomass,” and ‘biomass’ as “material of biological origin excluding material embedded in geological formations and/or fossilized”.

These measures help provide security for the much needed investments in the production of innovative materials from renewable sources, to overcome barriers for their deployment and reach an economy of scale. The bioeconomy already contributes to Europe’s sustainable growth – being worth € 2 trillion in annual turnover and accounting for more than 22 million jobs.

We kindly call on Members of the European Parliament and Member States’ delegates to consider our proposal when commenting on the EU Action Plan or revising the Directive 94/62/EC in the context of the new Circular Economy Package.

April 2016

\(^1\) CEN European Standard EN 16575:2014 ‘Bio-based products – Vocabulary’ (here)