

September 1, 2020

To Members of the Danish Parliament and the Minister of Climate, Energy, and Supply, Dan Jørgensen,

Writing on behalf of many organizations in the U.S. and Baltic States, the main countries exporting wood pellet biomass burned for energy in Denmark, we wish to express concern that a Danish Climate Agreement that omits serious biomass stipulations will bring Denmark no closer to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Our forests have felt the effects of Danish Climate agreements for nearly a decade and any agreement that relies on large-scale burning of wood for energy accounted as 'carbon neutral' will continue to destroy our forests and biodiversity, harm our communities, and threaten our climate.

At the end of 2019, we were pleased to see that the Danish government adopted one of the most ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets in the world. We were therefore disappointed to see that the Danish Climate Agreement does not so far commit to a near-term biomass phaseout, an end to subsidies, including tax exemptions, for burning wood for heat as well as electricity, or a tax on biomass. We very much hope that the Danish Government will come up with a further proposal to achieve this.

We note that the Climate Agreement includes an agreement to develop legally binding biomass sustainability standards. However, an investigation by Biofuelwatch and Global Forests Coalition found no evidence that sustainability standards for bioenergy in any country or region have so far been effective in mitigating adverse impacts on climate and forests in any way, especially where imports are involved.¹ Arguably the most detailed and ambitious biomass sustainability standards so far are those adopted by the Dutch government, yet there is little difference in the sourcing of pellets between Denmark and the Netherlands, and the same concerning sourcing practices and impacts have been reported and documented in respect of both countries. Furthermore, the adverse climate impacts of biomass energy arise from the carbon debt, i.e. the long time difference between trees being cut down and wood being burned, emitting carbon upfront on the one hand, and new trees and forests potentially growing back and sequestering equivalent amounts of carbon in the future. Additionally, standards cannot address the fact that a forest that is logged will not be able to sequester the carbon that a mature forest left to grow would have absorbed.

We urge the Government to phase out the use of biomass for district heating and to incentivise low-carbon alternatives such as district heat pumps. With no tax imposed on biomass, it is wrongly favored over truly clean renewables.

We look forward to hearing from you and would be grateful to discuss our concerns further with you. Respectfully,

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¹ <https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Biomass-Sustainability-Standards-Briefing.pdf>

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