

UFU WATCH

29 AUGUST 2009

COMMODITY WATCH

By Chris Osborne, Policy Officer**Bioenergy and the role of NI Agriculture**

The Ulster Farmers' Union are currently compiling their response to the draft Bioenergy Action Plan, issued by DETI.

Bioenergy is an organic based resource that can be grown or collected and includes energy crops, wood products and farm by-products. The Plan sets out how Northern Ireland can capitalise on its natural energy resources.

UFU members have a clearly defined role to play in this with the natural resources as well as input and outputs associated with farming to hand to enable them to contribute to taking Bioenergy forward in Northern Ireland. Most important of all, if implemented correctly, will form an integral part of future farming practices.

Launching the consultation, Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster said "the publication of this first cross-departmental draft Plan sets out how bioenergy can make an increased contribution to a more sustainable energy future in Northern Ireland. The successful and sustainable development of bioenergy has the potential to contribute to security of supply, deliver carbon emission reductions, provide business and employment opportunities as well as contributing to the challenging renewable energy targets proposed within the draft Strategic Energy Framework."

4 key objectives of the Bioenergy Action Plan

Objective 1 - Raise awareness and understanding of benefits and opportunities of Bioenergy.

Objective 2 - Create supportive and encouraging policy and regulatory framework to enable Bioenergy to thrive and develop. The UFU have met with DETI and the Regulator to air our concerns about the current structure of the Electricity grid in NI, in particular the merits of distributed generation. Aside from this, the UFU will be commenting on access to the existing electricity grid.

Objective 3 – Encourage and support targeted investment in key areas of the overall bioenergy supply chain to stimulate growth. The areas the UFU will be focusing on will be; feedstock supply, energy consumption and energy production.

Objective 4 - Focused and NI-relevant research into Bioenergy.

The draft Strategic Energy Framework 2009, which was launched for consultation last month, outlines the key energy goals in terms of competitiveness, security of supply, sustainability and

infrastructure. In addition, the Bioenergy Action Plan will work alongside the final report due to be published by ASFRE of which the UFU are key stakeholders.

There are a number of UFU members currently involved in Bioenergy projects (to varying degrees) and we will looking to use this plan (and others) to benefit themselves as well as prospective or potential parties.

The UFU's Rural Enterprise Committee will prepare the UFU's response and the Bioenergy Action Plan Consultation closes **30 October 2009**.

With growing interest in this sector, the UFU are compiling a database of members who are currently involved in energy/heat production. If you are, could please email contact details to;

Angela Scott
02890 370222 or
ascott@ufuhq.com

Please be assured that the information gathered will not be released to any other parties and will be for UFU use only. When you contact Angela, could you specify your source of Energy Production, namely is it Wind Turbine, CHP, Solar Panel Systems etc?