14 July 2016

Press Release

EuroPruning shows the pruning-to-energy value chain is viable

The EuroPruning project has developed and demonstrated new machineries and logistics tools to overcome barriers in the pruning-to-energy value chain. The project, which began in April 2013 and ends today, has demonstrated these developments in three regions of Europe, whilst examining the environmental and socio-economic implications of pruning use, to show the significant potentials of pruning mobilisation.

More than 13 million tonnes of prunings (over dry basis) are generated in the European Union each year, but only a marginal amount are used for energy generation. A number of technology and knowledge barriers impede the use of this resource, such as a complex value chain, low awareness and sustainability concerns. However, as Fernando Sebastián from CIRCE, co-ordinator of the project, explains, "the project has shown that, if the right conditions are in place, the energy use of pruning residues can be technically, environmentally, economically and socially worthwhile."

To overcome barriers, the project has developed new harvesting machineries – a baler and a chipper – which can collect prunings from the soil and make them ready for transportation. These machineries have been accompanied by a 'SmartBoxTool' and IT platform for optimising collection and delivery logistics, as well as monitoring pruning quality.

The technologies have been demonstrated in Continental (Brandenburg), Atlantic (Aquitaine) and Mediterranean (Aragón) climates to prove their efficiency and determine best practices for soil quality maintenance and pruning storage. The demonstrations have shown that the use of prunings for energy purposes is not opposed to sustainable soil management and long term soil fertility, and that prunings can achieve market quality requirements by optimising procurement and storage activities.

Additionally, environmental, economic and social assessments have been performed to show the substantial regional benefits of pruning use, where pruning resources are abundant and used sustainably. Work has also been performed to highlight market barriers and the business models that could overcome them, as well as legislative barriers and the potentials for political support.

The project has garnered strong interest, having been presented at over 50 international events, and will lead to a number of follow-up projects to further promote the use of prunings as an energy resource.

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Notes for editors

EuroPruning launched in April 2013 and ends in July 2016. It is co-ordinated by CIRCE (Research Centre for Energy Resources and Consumption) and the project consortium contains 17 members from Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Sweden and Belgium. It is co-financed by the European Commission (FP7-KBBE-312078). More information is available at www.EuroPruning.eu.

EuroPruning is co-financed by the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Innovation, Knowledge-Based Bio-Economy (KBBE)