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Position Manager

Experience

Feedstock The energetic use of wood from landscape and maintenance work (LCMW) is rather a side issue for Holzenergie Schweiz. However, because the association works with actors in whole Switzerland they have a good overview in which heat and power plants (HPPs) this type of feedstock is processed.

The big plants have a big influence on the use of wood in their regions and often the feedstock is also transported to them from other parts of the country. For example the HPP “Lignocalor” in the canton Bern works with municipalities, forestry companies and civil communities which are joined in a bundled organization. According to its quality the feedstock from all these partners is then optimally dispersed on different processing plants.

The experience made by Holzenergie Schweiz is that operators of smaller plants do not use wood from LCMW. In order for their boilers to process this feedstock without problems, pre-treatments like sieving and drying are necessary. However, these additional processing steps lead to more work and result in higher costs.

For example a big HPP in the canton of Jura manages big and small boilers, which lend them especially in summer season more flexibility. Like for the operator of a small firing the feedstock for the small boilers needs pre-treatment to secure properly and continuously working. However here the drying can happen with waste heat from the big boilers and the purchase of a sieving machine is for a big HPP operator more likely to be economical.

Supply chain In Switzerland mostly a direct supply chain is followed to use the wood from landscape and maintenance work with no intermediate storage (see below).



Financial Aid In Switzerland funding programs are developed by the single cantons and thus can vary from region to region. Basically, financial aid should depend on the actual prices of fossil energy carriers. Are these rising above a certain level should the funding automatically be frozen. With that enough incentive would be created to build new plants. Additionally, with plants run by wood energy it is still possible to generate CO₂- emission certificates which can be sold on the market.



Market

Situation

At the moment Switzerland has a feedstock surplus.

A big plant in the eastern part of Switzerland (Domat-Ems, 85 MW) is not working on full capacity (problems with investors) and throughout the whole country there is a lack of consumers.

The total surplus lies between 2 – 2.5 million m³ per year, of which about 0.3 million m³ come from wood from maintenance and landscape work.

The Swiss price-index for energy wood was adapted in the beginning of October according to the market situation by – 7%.

Problems

The strong Swiss Franc and the low oil prices made the year 2015 especially difficult for the producers of wood firing systems.

With the actual market situation it is to expect that in bivalent HPPs the oil and gas boilers are used more than usual.

It remains to be seen how the harvest volume of the coming season 2015/2016 will develop due to the low oil prices.

Outlook

Today, when a feasibility study is made for a potential new power system fired with wood it can lead to the decision not to do it. However, this is not a final valuation and it should be kept in mind that in the future the same study can lead to a positive outcome. Basically, the will to use renewable energies is here but at this moment the economic factors are not favourable. It can be expected that plants build 10 – 15 years ago and which have to be renewed in the next years are not going to be replaced by oil or gas heating systems.

Society

In the last decade a rethinking took place. The consumers are no longer indifferent in regard to the consumption, origin and amount of their used energy. This is a chance for the energetic use of wood because persuasive efforts are not needed anymore.

Operators and contractors of big HPP are aware of the potential presented by wood from LCMW. However, to include this feedstock a sensible utilization has to be elaborated.

For example: a plant in Gstaad/Saanen mixes different wood types (landscape, forest, waste) according to the feedstock quality and the actual energy need. Combined with a small oil or gas boiler the use of cheap feedstock and the security of optimized heat production can be realized.



Messages

- In most regions in Switzerland big HPPs influence the use of the local wood production.
- With a strong Swiss Franc and low prices of fossil fuels the market is not favourable for renewable energies.
- Switzerland has currently a feedstock surplus in regard of woody biomass.
- The society is aware of the benefits which the energetic use of wood represents, however the market situation complicates the building of new sites.

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