

EPAGMA UPDATE

September 2006

Thematic Strategy on Soil

As part of seven environmental Thematic Strategies envisaged by the European Union, the Commission is planning to publish a Thematic Strategy on Soil, which will be specifically dedicated to soils and provide the EU Member States with a framework within which to protect soil and use it in a sustainable way. The strategy may contain a proposal for a European law (a framework directive) which could set out common principles and a common methodology for the protection of soils. The Thematic Strategy was due in May-June 2006, but has however still not been published. The delay seems to be caused by a disagreement which has emerged between the Commissioners themselves. EPAGMA will continue to monitor the issue closely.

Security of Energy Supply

In June 2006, EPAGMA submitted its comments to the Commission's consultation on the Green Paper on a European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy. The Green Paper is consultation document which aims to stimulate discussion on the EU's future energy policy. The consultation will be open until 26 September 2006. On the basis of the responses submitted by stakeholders including the member states, the Commission will develop a Strategic Energy Review, followed by an Action Plan on Energy to be adopted in March 2007. EPAGMA will continue to ensure that the peat sector is properly heard and represented at EU level in the debate on the EU's future energy policy.

For more information on the Green Paper, please see:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/green-paper-energy/index_en.htm

EPAGMA joins the European Energy Forum

In August 2006 EPAGMA took over the membership of the International Peat Society in the European Energy Forum (EEF). The EEF organises high level conferences, dinners and seminars in Brussels with key Commission officials and members of the European Parliament. EPAGMA membership represents a unique opportunity for EPAGMA and its members to liaise with key EU stakeholders and decision-makers on energy issues.

For more information on the EEF, please see:

<http://www.f-e-e.org/>

Commission replies to written question on peat

On 29 August 2006, EU Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas replied to the Written Question submitted to him by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) Lena Ek (Sweden, ALDE) and Reino Paasilinna (Finland, PSE). The MEPs asked the Commission to support a redefinition of peat as a slowly renewable fuel. The Commissioner, however, stated that the Commission does not agree with considering peat as a renewable fuel. The Commission's position is supported by the 2006 IPCC guidelines where peat is not among the list of coal and lignite, but it is clearly not part of the biomass fuels either. The Commission, therefore, sees no need to reconsider a revision of the definition of peat and a reconsideration of the treatment of peat within the EU's Emission Trading Scheme. As a consequence of EPAGMA's and MEPs' increased efforts on this issue, however, Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs has recently indicated his willingness to meet with the Chairman of EPAGMA, Matti Hilli. The meeting is to be scheduled in the near future.

EPAGMA meetings

The EPAGMA Executive Board last met in Brussels on 23 August. The next Board meeting is scheduled for 30 November. The next meeting of all the EPAGMA members will take place on 4 October in Brussels.