

“Nordic forest sector in the biobased economy – challenges for political science and economics”

The SNS-supported workshop “The forest sector in the biobased economy: perspectives from policy and economic sciences” was organised in Uppsala 28-29 August 2013. The meeting generated several publications and side-event presentations. One main conclusion of the project is that the forest sector must take lessons from economic and political sciences to enhance its contribution to a sustainable, green economy. to a green economy.



The biobased economy

The road toward the realization of a biobased economy involves complex policy and economic challenges. The workshop “The forest sector in the biobased economy: perspectives from policy and economic sciences” was organized in Uppsala 28-29 August to identify current social science findings on the topic and spot future research needs within the biobased economy - from a political science/economics/business administration perspective (the role of consumers, innovation and CSR, policy formation, the role of forest industry, incentives). The meeting provided a better understanding on how economic and political drivers can contribute to a

bioeconomy to implement appropriate regulations, and get incentives right. It showed that socio-economic research available can guide stakeholders’ strategies and contribute to policy decisions and also a critical awareness.

A concept with different definitions

The workshop concluded that the definition of the bioeconomy varied - from a very broad understanding encompassing all products and services from the forest; to a narrow definition concentrating on new innovations of biomaterials, fuels and chemicals in biotechnological processes. In both cases, social science is needed to clarify the societal dimension of the bioeconomy.

The workshop

The presentations highlighted two key roles of the social sciences. The first involves the conceptualization and definition of the biobased economy idea and the implications for society and the forest sector. This inquiry is crucial as the bioeconomy concept is vague and contested and may therefore be used differently and with different policy implications. The second group of presentations dealt with drivers, obstacles and effects of a biobased forest economy, such as innovation processes, bioenergy policies, corporate strategies and consumer behavior. Together, the contributions underscored and illustrated how the transformation toward a biobased economy needs to be further discussed, examined and even questions in an open public exchange instead of an issue for ‘specialists’ only. Further, the workshop clearly demonstrated that the forest sector’s contribution to the biobased economy must take into account decisions and behavior among policy-makers, industry and consumers.

The meeting has been documented in a Proceedings publication. A couple of presentations,



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including a conceptual paper by Kleinschmit et al., were published in a Special Issue of the Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research. The project furthermore generated side-events at conferences and other activities.

List of publications and spin-off activities

Roos, A. Kleinschmit, D., Toppinen A., Baardsen, S., Lindstad, B., Jellesmark Thorsen, B. (2014) Proceedings "Nordic workshop: "The forest sector in a biobased economy – perspectives from policy and economic sciences" August 28-29, 2013, Uppsala/Sweden. SLU Forest Products - Proceedings 2014:1 Uppsala, Sweden.

Hannerz, M., Nohrstedt, H-Ö., Roos, A. (2014) Research for a bio-based economy in the forest sector – a Nordic example, Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research, 29:4, 299-300. (Introduction to Special Issue)

Kleinschmit et al. 2014. Shades of green: a social scientific view on bioeconomy in the forest sector. Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research 29(4): 402-410.

Side-event presentations:

11 Dec 2013. Side event: The forest sector in a biobased economy – challenges for the forest sector, policy and research. Metsä2013, European Forest Week, Hotel Santa Claus, Rovaniemi, Finland.

9 Oct. 2014. Side Event: Bioeconomy in the forest sector – the Nordic example. IUFRO World Congress, Salt Lake City, U.S.A.

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