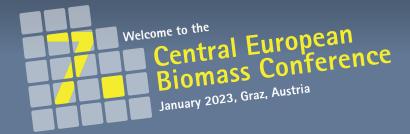
# Bioenergy in Austria

A factor creating added value





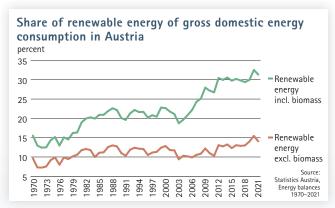




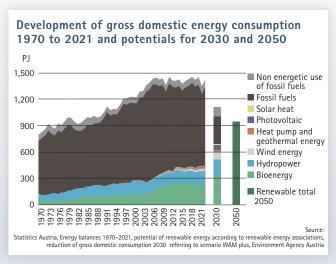


## The impact of biomass ...

Over the past decades, the bioenergy sector has become a mainstay of Austria's energy accommodation. Biomass provides a substantial contribution to Austria's transition towards a sustainable and climate-friendly energy system, creating domestic added value as well as employment and spending power. Austrian enterprises and research institutions ensure that our bioenergy technologies occupy top positions in the domestic and international markets.



Without bioenergy, the share of renewable energy has barely exceeded 15 percent of the total energy consumption in recent decades.



Mainly thanks to bioenergy, there was a sharp increase in renewable energy production in the early 2000s.



With a share of over 80 percent, forests are currently Austria's most important raw-material supplier for bioenergy.

#### The biggest domestic energy source

Biomass is by far the most important domestic energy source. In 2021, 47 percent of the total domestic energy volume were provided by biomass, followed by hydropower which provided 27 percent. Biomass is Austria's most relevant renewable energy source, accounting for 55 percent of the total amount. Once again, hydropower occupies the second rank, accounting for 31 percent.

#### EU goals: not without bioenergy

Between the years 1990 and 2021, the share of bioenergy of the total energy consumption in Austria has evolved from 9.1 to 17.3 percent even though Austrian energy consumption increased by 36 percent during that period. This was possible because the total use of biomass now amounts to more than 2.5 times the volume of the year 1990.

According to European Union requirements, Austria was bound to attain a share of 34 percent of renewable energy in its total energy mix by the year 2020. Due to the lower consumption of crude oil during the pandemic, this target was exceeded at 36.5 percent. Without bioenergy however, the share of renewable energies would drop down to about 15 percent at most. It is therefore obvious that without bioenergy the exit from nuclear power and fossil fuels is not feasible.

#### Forests: main source of raw material

The most important source of raw material for the biomass sector are our forests. In 2021, they provided 83 percent of Austria's biomass volume; the rest came from the agricultural and the waste sectors. If its potential is consistently made available, Austria's use of biomass could increase by a further 38 percent by the year 2030. About half of this potential for development is associated with the agricultural sector and half to the forestry sector. In practically all existing energy transition scenarios, biomass is developing into the most important energy source nationwide and will overtake oil and natural gas in the medium term.



There is still great potential for expansion in the energetic use of agricultural residues.

## ... for our energy system

#### Heat market dominant

Traditionally, biomass in Austria is used for heat production. In 2021, heating consumed 84 percent of the bioenergy production, followed by biofuel with a share of 9 percent and green electricity from biomass and biogas with a share of 7 percent. Around three quarters of biomass heat are used in single combustion systems, the remaining 25 percent are used for district heating which showed the highest increase, its production having almost quadrupled since 2005.

Biomass holds a share of 31 percent of the total heat energy mix. For the heating of dwellings in Austria, it is by far the most popular source of energy with a share of more than 40 percent of the total energy use. 670 000 Austrian households use primarily wood-burning heating devices to keep their living spaces warm. A distribution grid of about 2 400 biomass district heating stations makes sure that large parts of Austria are provided with climate-friendly heating.

### Energy for mobility: a challenge

With a share of 6.0 percent, biomass is the most noteworthy renewable energy source in the transport sector. Despite increasing new registrations of electric cars, the share of electricity in road traffic is only 1.8 percent. In addition to further development of renewable energy sources, new mobility concepts fostering the public transport sector as well as car sharing are vital to contain carbon emission levels from the combustion of fossil fuels.

#### Green power, whatever the weather

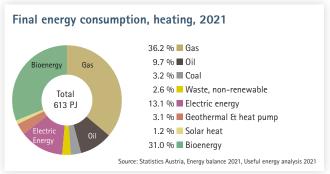
With a share of 6.7 percent in electricity generation, biomass is the third most important producer of green electricity. Wood gas cogeneration technology, which is becoming increasingly widespread in Austria and Germany, allows for high efficiency regarding small-scale power generation. Biomass combined heat and power plants are capable of generating electricity around-the-clock and thus to make an important contribution to electricity base load accommodation.

#### Outlook

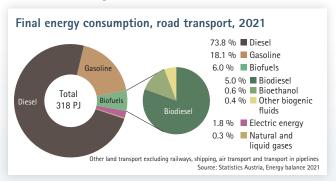
Future prospects by the year 2050 envision increased use of biomass as substitute for natural gas, for electricity generation, high-temperature processes in industry and in the transport sector. Regarding the latter biofuels could gain in importance mostly in the field of aviation.



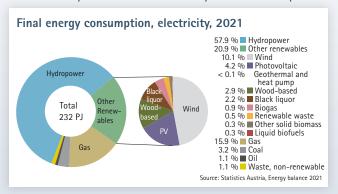
Approximately 84 percent of Austria's bioenergy is used for the generation of heat.



For heating, biomass is Austria's second most important energy source after natural gas.



For transportation it is most difficult to replace fossil fuels – biomass covers about 6 percent of the total consumption in road transport.



Biomass covers 6.7 percent of electricity generation, the biggest part of that is produced by wood CHP plants.



The production of district heating based on biomass has almost quadrupled over the last 15 years.

## Regional effects of bioenergy

### Case study: the region of Hartberg

A study by the Austrian Energy Agency on behalf of the Climate and Energy Fund has closely examined the practical effects of biomass use in the Climate and Energy Model Region (KEM) Hartberg in eastern Styria. Said region includes the following communities: Hartberg town, Hartberg surroundings, Greinbach and St. Johann in der Haide. 38 percent of that area are covered by forests. The harvest of timber could still be increased by about 50 percent. Overall 12 600 people are living in the region. Their combined consumption of heat energy amounts to approximately 720 terajoule (TJ) per year. 53 percent of heat energy consumption in the region are covered by fossil energy sources, mainly heating oil. The remaining 47 percent are covered by bioenergy sources.

#### An example for other regions

The presumptions for the calculation of added value and employment effects in this case study were chosen in a way that makes them easily transferable. Hence the Climate and Energy Model Region Hartberg gives a replicable example for many other regions in Austria. The insights gathered from this project should help persons in charge in other regions opt for investments in domestic renewable energy sources.

#### Employment in the chain of custody

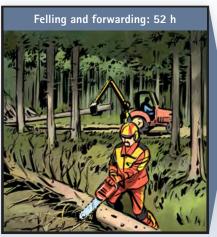
In contrast to fossil fuels, regarding the use of bioenergy the whole chain of custody – from forest management practices all the way to the stove or boiler – usually generates domestic employment. An example: To transfer one TJ of wood (=114 solid cubic metres) from the forest to a domestic household – passing several intermediate steps as well as a small district heating system – approximately 168 regional working hours are needed. In detail, these include:

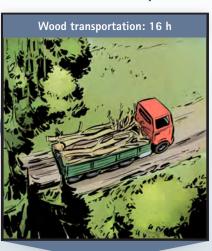
- 16 man hours of forest management and silvicultural measures
- 52 man hours of felling and forwarding to the forest road
- 16 man hours for wood transportation
- 17 man hours for the production of wood chips and the transportation to the district heating plant
- 50 man hours of operation and maintenance of the district heating plant
- 17 man hours for administrative tasks.

For one TJ of firewood to be burned in a logwood boiler, 143 direct regional working hours are necessary; 192 man hours are needed for a tile stove. The operation of an oil heating system secures about 21 direct regional working hours per TJ, the use of a gas heating system only ten.

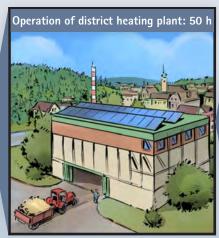
#### 1 TJ of bioenergy creates 168 regional man hours along the chain of custody













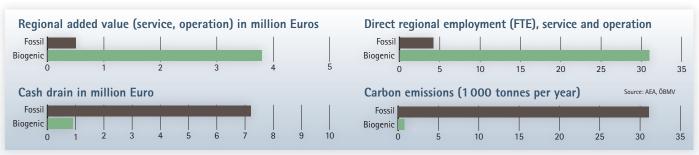


#### Seven times more jobs with biomass

Even though 53 percent of heat energy consumption in the KEM Hartberg are covered by fossil energy sources, the fossil system only provides 4.2 regional full-time equivalents (FTE). The biogenic system secures 31 full-time jobs. The direct regional creation of value through maintenance, operation and fuel supply in a biogenic system amounts to 3.8 million Euro per year; fossil plants create only 0.5 million Euro. The money drain from the region is about 0.9 million Euro in a biogenic system, but 7.2 million Euro if a fossil system is used. Carbon emissions in Hartberg caused by bioenergy amount to 800 tons per year. Heating systems using fuel oil emit 31 100 tons every year.

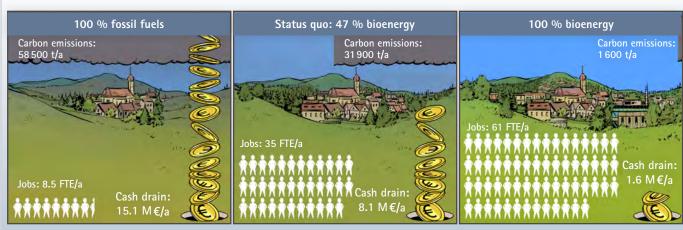
#### Scenario with 100 percent bioenergy

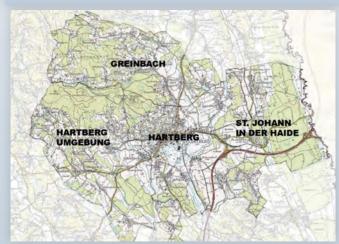
A best and a worst case scenario regarding the use of biomass for heating in the Hartberg region was evaluated. In the first scenario (100 percent use of biomass), the yearly maintenance and fuel supply would secure 61 jobs, whereas the other scenario (100 percent fossil fuels) would only retain 8.5 jobs. Maintenance and operation of biomass heating systems could generate 6.5 million Euro of regional added value opposed to 1.1 million Euro in the fossil scenario. Annual money drain from the region drops from 15.1 million Euro in the fossil scenario to 1.6 million Euro in the biogenic case. Carbon emissions would add up to 58 500 tons in the fossil setting and to only 1 600 tons in the bioenergy scenario.



Effects of bioenergy and fossil energy for space heating in the Climate and Energy Model Region Hartberg; energy mix contains 47 percent of biomass.

#### Regional effects of heat allocation in the Climate and Energy Model Region Hartberg





The Climate and Energy Model Region Hartberg in eastern Styria consists of four communities with a total of 12 600 inhabitants.



The KEM Hartberg can serve as a prime example for many other regions in Austria.

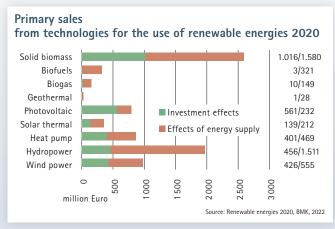
## National effects of bioenergy

#### 24000 jobs in Austria

Thanks to the use of renewable energy sources, more than 44000 full-time jobs are secured in Austria, 24000 of them are associated with the biomass sector. A large share of the jobs in the field of bioenergy is related to the fuel supply of facilities processing solid biomass. Among the renewable energy branch more than every second full-time job deals with the use of solid biomass. Generating 38 percent of the total turnover in the field of renewable energy sources, biomass is the sector's biggest contributor with almost 3.1 billion Euro. The bigger part of this turnover – about 1.6 billion Euro – comes from the provision of combustible material (logwood, wood chips, wood pellets or sawmill by-products).

#### Boilers and stoves made in Austria

In the year 2021, 12 247 pellet boilers, 1531 combined firewood and pellet boilers, 2750 wood log boilers and 2850 wood chip boilers were sold on the Austrian market. Furthermore some 2400 pellet stoves, 5500 cooking stoves and 8000 wood log stoves were sold on the domestic market. The total turnover of Austrian biomass boiler producers (1580 million Euro) as well as of domestic stove manufacturers (132 million Euro) amounted to 1.7 billion Euro in the year 2021. This resulted in a total number of 7000 jobs in Austria.



In the year 2020, technologies for the use of biomass as an energy source generated a turnover of more than 3 billion Euro.



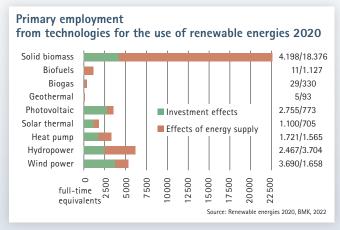
A big part of the effect on the turnover created by renewable energies is accounted for by the allocation of solid biomass fuels.

#### Hot on the international market

Technologies for the use of bioenergy have a long tradition in Austria, which has resulted in market leadership, patents and research skills. Austrian producers of biomass boilers sell about 80 percent of their products abroad. In Germany for instance two out of three installed biomass boilers are of Austrian origin. The most important export markets for Austrian biomass boilers are Germany, France and Italy. In most cases, components for biomass boilers are either produced by the manufacturers themselves or by other domestic enterprises. Austrian companies not only produce the boilers, but also compatible components such as buffer tanks as well as extractor and storage systems.

#### Getting out of oil and gas

After sales of biomass boilers collapsed in 2014 as a result of low heating oil prices, high growth has been recorded again since 2019. Interest in modern biomass heating systems has increased significantly due to attractive funding campaigns at state and federal level as well as the sharp rise in oil and gas prices. In 2021, around 19 000 boilers were sold, 41 percent more biomass systems than in the previous year, and the sales figures for pellet heating systems up to 100 kW were higher than ever before.



Biomass fosters employment in the region – in 2020, that accounted for 24 000 full-time jobs.



Austrian producers of biomass boilers and stoves provide approximately 7 000 domestic jobs.

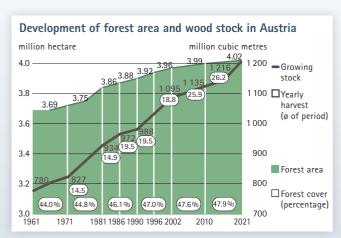


#### Wood stock at a record high

Growing stock in domestic forests has been on the rise throughout the past few decades and has reached a record high of 1216 billion solid cubic metres according to the Austrian Forest Inventory. Especially in small–scale private forests (which cover more than 50 percent of the total forest area) the harvest of wood is still significantly lower than the increment. The National Forest Inventory stated reserves for thinning measures and other usages of 250 million solid cubic metres in the forests, both high-quality saw logs as well as energy wood.

#### New chances for forest owners

About 300 000 persons in Austria generate income from forest management. Until a few decades ago, forest owners couldn't sell industrial roundwood or wood chips in a cost-covering way. Hence the first thinning measures were often omitted, even though they belong to the most important forest management practices. Only trees that are provided sufficient growing space can develop into strong, stable and valuable individuals. Forest management practices also help in achieving a good nutrient balance and microclimate and they foster soil organisms as well. Due to increased demand by the bioenergy sector, thinning measures are more common nowadays. Thus more wood is available on the market.



Despite an increased wood harvest, growing stock in Austrian forests has risen significantly over the past decades.



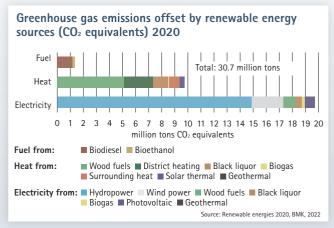
Wood fuel products are often by-products of harvesting as well as of the processing of stem wood.

#### Energy wood stabilises the market

Forest owners will continue to earn their principal income with more valuable products like saw logs, but the continuous and reliable demand for energy wood which is independent from the timber market helps to stabilise the roundwood prices. The energetic use of raw timber helps fighting the spreading of the bark beetle, because beetle-infested wood is chopped before the beetles are fully developed. This protects the growing stock of the Austrian forest owners from massive loss in value.

#### Bioenergy: protecting the climate

In 2020, the use of renewable energy reduced the carbon emissions in Austria by 30.7 million tons. The utilisation of bioenergy alone accounted for more than 11 million tons. Besides the beneficial effects for the climate, the Austrian economy is able to save millions of Euros in the field of carbon emission trading. In the bioenergy sector, the biggest part of the carbon emissions offset, with a share of 45 percent, comes from wooden biomass used for heat generation. Replacement of oil heating systems by modern biomass boilers has led to a decrease of carbon emissions by 38 percent since 1990 in the space heating sector. The transport sector on the other hand has experienced an increase of over 50 percent.



Through the use of renewable energies, Austria saved the emission of 30.7 million tons of  $CO_2$ , over 11 million tons are offset by bioenergy.



As a result of the utilisation of energy wood, formerly neglected first thinning measures are now cost-covered.



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