

EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service
Transcript of an EPRS Podcast
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PODCAST Wood

Voice 1: Brian

Voice 2: Sarah

JINGLE to open intro to podcast

VOICE 1

You're listening to the European Parliamentary Research Service podcast on wood.

VOICE 2

After years of falling into disuse, wood is being re-discovered as a source of biomass and construction material that could play a big role in the fight against climate change.

VOICE 1

So listen carefully!! ... because wood is back in fashion!

END OF JINGLE

VOICE 2

The pressure to sacrifice forests for new agricultural land, combined with the advent of new building materials such as concrete and steel had relegated wood to a secondary level... But the need to bring rising CO2 levels down is tilting the balance back in favour of this good old material again...

VOICE 1

And it's hardly surprising, considering its properties... Did you know that

during its production, one tonne of concrete has released nearly 160 kg of CO₂ into the atmosphere? And that the same amount of wood has actually absorbed 1.7 tonnes of carbon dioxide.... ?

VOICE 2

So if we were to start building wooden houses again, we could significantly change the carbon balance! And that's not the only advantage... wood also offers excellent thermal and sound insulation, and it's a natural regulator of moisture.

VOICE 1

But the revival of wood extends well beyond the construction sector... In the current effort to promote the transition towards renewable energy sources, wood can play an important role, not only as a substitute for coal in power plants, but also as a basic material for the production of liquid or gaseous fuels for maritime transport and the aviation sector.

VOICE 2

In the past couple of years, the promotion of renewable energies for electricity production has also triggered the construction of many large-scale wood-burning plants... the problem is finding enough wood nearby not to have to transport it over long distances, which would make these facilities less environmentally interesting...

VOICE 1

And with rising fossil fuel prices... good old wood-burning stoves are making a comeback! But be careful... because using wood that hasn't been properly dried, or burning it in poorly adapted open fireplaces, can result in massive indoor and outdoor pollution...

VOICE 2

So rather than millions of domestic fireplaces, a solution could be to optimise the way in which we collect and use the wood in powerplants, and distribute the heat through district heating schemes.

VOICE 1

But where are we going to get all this wood from?

VOICE 2

Well, there's certainly going to be pressure to transform less productive agricultural land back into forests! Northern Europe still has relatively dense forest cover, but reforestation programmes in southern Europe and northern Africa could bring about multiple benefits:

VOICE 1

Cleaner air, less heat, new investment and millions of new jobs to develop a new wood-based sustainable economy in the wider Mediterranean region...

VOICE 2

Certainly worth considering! but growing new forests is not something that happens overnight, so a long-term vision is required... At the same time, this new sector would only develop successfully if it's matched by the parallel development of a new wood-based economic sector.

VOICE 1

It would also entail the appropriate transfer of new technologies to make better use of the growing forests, updating building codes, investing in new research programmes and involving local populations in the transition.

VOICE 2

It's certainly an ambitious idea... but where there's a will, there's a way! So stay tuned because wood is certainly making its comeback!

VOICE 1

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MUSIC JINGLE TO CONCLUDE