

BTEC Applauds Passage of 2018 Farm Bill

The Act improves Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovations Program and revises Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels.

WASHINGTON – December 20, 2018 – The Biomass Thermal Energy Council (BTEC) applauds passage of the 2018 Farm Bill, the Agriculture Improvement Act, which increases authorized funding to \$25 million for fiscal years 2019 through 2023 for the Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovations Program (CWEIP). The Farm Bill also includes language directing the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to equitably distribute funding for the Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels.

“The use of wood for thermal energy from sustainably managed forest lands has numerous economic and environmental benefits including local job creation, enhanced energy security in rural communities, reduction of GHG emissions from fossil fuels, and improved forest health, which reduce the risk of wildfires on public and private lands,” said Jeff Serfass, BTEC Executive Director. “We applaud members of the Senate and House for coming together through a bipartisan process to improve the CWEIP and enabling our industry to help address the forest resource issues facing our country,” Serfass continued.

The improved CWEIP establishes a new national competitive grant program providing capital grants of up to 35% of installed capital cost on advanced community-scale wood heating, district heating and wood combined heat and power projects, as well as grants for projects that commercialize new innovative uses of wood.

The USDA Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels has focused on the biodiesel sector. The Farm Bill modifies the equitable distribution of funds for the program by limiting the amount of payments for advanced biofuel produced from a single eligible commodity to not exceed one-third of the total funding available in a fiscal year. It also authorizes \$7 million in mandatory funding for fiscal years 2018 through 2023 and maintains an authorization of appropriations in the amount of \$20 million for fiscal years 2019 through 2023.

Forests are facing increasing threats from insects, disease, wildfires, development pressures, and rapidly shifting markets. Private and public forests need new markets, especially for low grade wood. Community scale heating, combined heat and power and district heating projects will help build strong local markets in support of responsible stewardship of these lands. Absent new market innovation, these forest health issues put at risk the many benefits that Americans receive from our forests. CWEIP will address the urgent management needs facing America’s forests, while accomplishing many other benefits by providing renewable heat for public and private buildings and supporting innovative new uses of low grade wood.

BTEC thanks Congress, their staff, and the President for the much needed improvements in the Farm Bill, as well as partners in the Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition, Orion Advocates and BTEC's members and staff that have pushed these changes over the past year.

BTEC invites those who support advancing policies for modern wood heating to join BTEC and its Policy and Government Affairs Coalition by contacting Peter Thompson (peter.thompson@biomassthermal.org) or call (202) 596-3974 x302

The Biomass Thermal Energy Council (BTEC) is an association of biomass fuel producers, appliance manufacturers and distributors, supply chain companies, and non-profit organizations that view biomass thermal energy and combined heat and power as renewable, responsible, clean, and energy-efficient pathways to meeting America's energy needs and strengthening local economies. BTEC engages in research, education, and public advocacy for the fast-growing biomass thermal energy industry.