

# **IEA Task 30 Short Rotation Crops for Bioenergy Systems**

**Meeting in Denmark  
September 22-25 2001**

## **UK Country Report**

### **Market Status**

Up until now most of the energy crop planting has been of willow coppice for power generation projects that have premium price contracts in the electricity market. There are around 2000ha in the ground now with around 1500ha planted for the ARBRE project in Yorkshire (N England).

I expect that in spring 2002, around 200-300ha will be planted in total.

Miscanthus is being planted and there may be as much as 200ha in the ground. Some of this is for energy purposes but fibre thatching and other products have driven most of the planting to date. There may be up to 100ha of new planting in spring 2002.

### **Policy Issues**

#### *Planting grants*

Both short rotation coppice and Miscanthus are supported under government schemes agreed under the CAP's rural development programme. These grants are only eligible to growers who can prove that they have a credible energy end use for the material grown.

In England, under and Energy Crops Scheme growers can get a planting grant of £1000/ha or £1600/ha for short rotation coppice on arable land and on grassland respectively and can still claim set-aside payments on land registered under the arable area payment scheme. Miscanthus has got planting grant aid under a different part of the CAP and in England can get a planting grant of £920/ha.

There are also some funds available for growers to form energy crop producer groups.

#### *Markets for energy crops*

The NFFO scheme, which gave premium price electricity generation contracts to biomass power stations, has now finished and there will be no new contracts under this scheme. However, those schemes with existing contracts will keep their 15 year agreements, and once built, these will provide the major market for energy crops over the next few years.

Details of a new scheme to be launched as a replacement to NFFO are soon to be announced. This will be an obligation on electricity generators to generate a certain proportion of the electricity from renewable energy sources. The generators using

fossil fuels will be allowed to buy out of their obligation at a certain fixed price. This will in effect put a floor in the market and will encourage the generators to comply. It is unclear yet whether this will be fixed at a high enough level to allow energy crops to be grown for power generation or whether cheaper renewables such as offshore wind power will be used.

There is currently very little incentive to use biomass crops for heating as oil and gas for heating are virtually untaxed and consequently cheap and convenient.

#### *Research and development support*

The DTI's new and renewable energy programme continues to provide development support for energy crop research projects though most of the support is now on a 50% funded basis.

#### **Pest and Disease Reports**

Rusts in some varieties of willows are a big issue and plant breeding and clonal mixtures are being used to minimise the impact. There are some new exciting varieties coming out of UK breeding programmes.

Willow beetles (Chrysomelli beetles) are a continual threat to most willow varieties and attacks continue to be devastating at some sites. Spraying with insecticide is undesirable but needs to be practiced occasionally to save crops from early defoliation from this difficult pest.

Some diseases are starting to be seen in Miscanthus crops.

#### **Other Information and Useful web sites**

The web site for the government department called DEFRA gives details of the energy crops scheme.

The web site for the government department called DTI gives details of the ongoing renewable energy research projects.

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