



# ENRD Thematic Group on Bioeconomy and Climate Action in rural areas

## Rural biogas production webinar Highlights

This videoconference was organised as an additional activity of the ENRD Thematic Group (TG) on Bioeconomy and Climate Action in rural areas. The aim was to give interested TG members the possibility to exchange on experiences of rural biogas production around Europe. The discussions focused on the evolutions of the policy context and of the national and EU incentives for biogas production, as well as on the economic sustainability of rural biogas plants.

### Event information

**Date and Location:** 19 March 2020, webinar

**Organisers:** [ENRD Contact Point](#)

**Participants:** 18 participants representing National Rural Networks, Managing Authorities, research, rural advisory services and EU institutions.

**Outcomes:** Sharing approaches from several MS, discussion

**Web page:** [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-thematic-group-bioeconomy-and-climate-action-rural-areas-webinar\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-thematic-group-bioeconomy-and-climate-action-rural-areas-webinar_en)

## Policy context and incentives for biogas production in Italy

[Stefano Fabiani](#) (CREA – [Italian NRN](#)) presented the evolutions of the biogas sector in Italy from 2005 to 2018. A national subsidy scheme for renewable energy production has led to the development of a vibrant sector of over 2000 rural biogas plants mainly from agricultural source. Livestock farmers recognised and actively took up this support opportunity. As the scheme reaches its end, the biogas producers need to find new business models. Shifting from electricity production to biomethane for transport fuels could be one viable option. Valorising the benefits of biogas production for rural employment, nutrient recycling and GHG reductions, in line with the Rural Development objectives, could help make the sector sustainable.

## Sweden promoting biogas production on farms

[John Andersson](#) ([Jordbruksverket](#) - Swedish MA) described the Swedish efforts to promote manure based biogas production by farmers through targeted advisory services. This specific farm advice is financed by the Swedish RDP and is free of charge for farmers. Complementary investment support under the the RDP could cover up to 40% of the costs of launching manure based biogas plants. The objective is to help farmers build biogas plants, to facilitate related networking activities and encourage the sharing of experiences. The transport sector is also a key market for biogas in Sweden.

## Reflections at EU level

Galin Gentchev ([DG AGRI](#)) referred to the French experience where the large scale of rural biogas production, the outlet to the national grid and national incentives have together helped build a sustainable bioenergy model. Further economic and climate benefits can be exploited through upgrading biogas plants to produce purified biomethane. The CO<sub>2</sub> recovered as a byproduct of the methanisation process can also be commercialised, creating an additional income source.

## Further discussions

Modern co-generation biogas plants allow for simultaneous heat and electric power production. Overall, the scale of biogas plants (farm level or larger), the utilised feedstock and its availability, and the target market – electricity, biomethane, or biofuels – determine the business model, the applicable policy and the support framework. The [EU Renewable Energy Directive II](#) orients EU biogas producers to look for alternatives to unsustainable energy crops that were used for first generation biofuels. Southern MS have more choice in cultivating energy crops as intermediary crops, whereas Northern MS build their biogas production on the use of waste as feedstock.

The challenges for achieving commercially viable biogas production include the insufficiency of suitable waste and the more competitive price of natural gas. Valorising the non-energy aspects of biogas – such as the distribution of the digestate as fertiliser and the CO<sub>2</sub> benefits – can provide leads to increase the sector's viability and ensure it plays a role in achieving the EU's target of producing 32% of renewable energy by 2030.

