

What biofutures need is America's Cup energy

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Marsden Point ... loading logs this morning

NEW ZEALAND could have a thriving biofutures industry, producing clean products from waste and cutting greenhouse gas emissions, if it put as much effort into addressing climate change as it puts into the America's Cup yacht race, says the Bioenergy Association.

Instead, it has a “piecemeal and ad hoc” approach from Government, association chief executive Brian Cox says.

The association predicts that by 2040, biomass and waste-based industries could supply more than 15 per cent of New Zealand's energy needs, and cut greenhouse gas emissions by 5 per cent.

But, currently, huge numbers of New Zealand's plantation forest logs are being exported. The wood processing industry says that in Northland, for example, about half the four million cubic metres of wood a year being harvested in the region is exported as logs, leaving them with a supply crisis.

Cox says that exporting logs is an example of the lack of co-ordination hampering the development of clean new industries.

“The highest-quality wood fuel comes from wood processing, so there is a significant benefit to New Zealand's energy supply to have trees processed within New Zealand rather than having logs exported,” he said.

No revenue

“When logs are exported we are also exporting the processing residues (sawdust and shavings) which are our best source of wood fuel – but get no revenue in return.”

Cox says the [approach being taken in Queensland](#), where the state government has developed a roadmap for the biofutures sector, and Queensland University of Technology is leading research into profitable processes for turning waste from the agricultural sector into bioenergy and bioproducts, could develop a \$6 billion industry.



Bria Cox

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“You would think that with opportunities such as this, that the Government would be showing more interest than it does,” he said.

“Think of the regional development and employment opportunities that would occur. Queensland is putting \$14 million into researching these opportunities, while New Zealand sits on its hands.

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Cox says this is where the Government should be putting its climate change effort, instead of looking to buy carbon credits from other countries to meet its international emissions reductions obligations.

Heat sector

“Buying carbon credits offshore sends money that could be used to assist New Zealand industry to other countries resulting in no lasting benefit,” he said.

“We should be taking advantage of low-cost opportunities to reduce our carbon emissions here in New Zealand by increasing our use of bioenergy, particularly in the heat sector.

“The Bioenergy Association would like to see the Government explore these opportunities as is happening in Queensland. We can be a global participant or sit and watch international boat races where our technology is being used by all other competitors.”

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