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2017 Outlook: Spotlight on torrefied biomass

Michael Wild, president of IBTC

Michael Wild, president of the IBTC (International Biomass Torrefaction Council), gives his views on the year ahead.

Right now, the question on people's minds is what 2017 might have in store for us. Yet, what we do know is that the turn from 2016 and 2017 seems to be a kind of watershed for the torrefaction industry.

For many years the industry put a lot of resources and investment into technological development. This ranged from prototype via demonstration units to industrial plants.

First, the torrefaction processes and syngas handling were to be brought under control. Then issues around densification to make the torrefied biomass transportable and tradable had to be mastered. In parallel, many concerted efforts to clarify all kind of regulatory matters and issues around the handling, storage and transportation of torrefied biomass in bulk had to be dealt with.

Fast forward to today, technological development is now fully completed and under control by a number of companies. Densification to pellets or briquettes is completely integrated in turn key supplies.

Working together

Final adjustments in densification can only be done in cooperation with customers expressing their clear requirements for individual markets.

For the European market the pending question on REACH registration necessity has been clarified by a working group set up by the International Biomass Torrefaction Council (IBTC).

Globally, the agreement by the ISO committee on the ISO 17225-8 Technical Specification for *Thermally Treated Biomass* – for the first time in history – defines clear categories and parameters for biogenic solid fuels resulting from a thermal pre-treatment processing. This is ready to come into place as we speak (early 2017).



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Torrefaction has been received as a sector with many moving pieces up in the air. In 2016, those pieces came together assembling a very nice picture of an industry with proven technology ready to roll out on a big scale.

First, fully industrial projects started construction in 2016 and their financial closings have been achieved or are close to being achieved. Some plants will process woody biomass and others will process agro biomass. Therefore, we do expect the year ahead to see large cargoes of torrefied biomass to be contracted and moved. We also expect to see bigger consumption to start in Europe, Japan and eventually the USA.

This outlook was written by Michael Wild, president of the IBTC (International Biomass Torrefaction Council) for Bioenergy Insight.-

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