

Episode 36 A, B & C. What would Rachel Carson do? On September 14, 2022, the E U voted to end subsidies for “primary woody biomass”, The end of wood burning subsidies for electricity-only power plants in the European Union September 15, 2022. Episode 36 A: What would Rachel Carson do?

The Rachel Carson Council follows the ecological ethic of Rachel Carson, climate justice. Rachel Carson is best known for the exposé in her 1962 classic, *Silent Spring*, of the harmful effects of pesticides like DDT on wildlife and on human beings alike. But Carson’s larger, more enduring contribution, in her writing and in her environmental and political advocacy, is the combination of reverence, awe, and wonder for all living things, their interdependence, and their beauty, along with stark warnings of the destructive nature of human arrogance in attempting to control and dominate nature in the interests of efficiency, profit and greed.

“Bad Business” is the fifth comprehensive report from the Rachel Carson Council. It is a sequel to the Rachel Carson Council’s last report, “Clear Cut”, that laid out the devastating consequences for the environment, for climate change, and for citizens and workers of clear-cutting forests and producing wood pellets at industrial scale to be shipped overseas to produce electricity in coal-fired utilities. These reports constitute a series around a common theme central to the work of the Rachel Carson Council and to the ecological ethic of Rachel Carson, climate justice.

The first paragraph of “Bad Business” reads “False solutions to the climate crisis are worse than no solutions at all. They divert critical resources and undermine efforts to truly address the problem. That the industrial use of woody biomass, or wood pellets, is based on false claims was made clear in the Rachel Carson Council’s report, “Clear Cut”. This so-called “new” technology is merely an update on the ancient source of fire, trees. But now, it plays a direct role in the destruction of our critical forests. Science has repeatedly proven that forests are better left standing in the fight against increasing carbon emissions. As of today, forests are the best, cheapest, and easiest solution to draw down large amounts of carbon from the atmosphere to mitigate or reverse climate change.”

Episode 36 B: On September 14, 2022, the E U voted to end subsidies for “primary woody biomass”

Gerda noted that on September 14, 2022, the European Union (E U) limited subsidies for burning trees under renewable energy directive. Members of the European Parliament (M E Ps) voted on an amendment to phase down a portion or share of wood counted as renewable but reject calls for complete phaseout. Scientists warned that cutting and burning trees for bioenergy releases more carbon into the atmosphere than burning gas or coal. The European parliament has called to end public subsidies for the environmentally destructive practice of burning trees for fuel, but campaigners warned the plans risked being “too little, too late”. Voting on an amendment to the EU’s renewable energy directive, M E Ps called to “phase down” the share of trees counted as renewable energy in EU targets. But they swerved setting any dates to reduce the burning of “primary wood”. They rejected calls for a complete phaseout of a form of energy generation that scientists have warned releases more carbon into the atmosphere than burning gas or coal. In a long-awaited vote on September 14, 2022, M E Ps voted to end subsidies for “primary woody biomass”, namely healthy, standing trees logged for fuel, or fallen trees. Trees cut down for fire protection or road safety reasons may continue to benefit from renewable energy subsidies, under the parliament’s proposals. The World Wildlife Fund and the Clean Air Committee in the Netherlands said there was more to be done.

Episode 36 C: The end of wood burning subsidies for electricity-only power plants in the European Union

Gerda noted that Birdlife Europe wrote an article about the European Union (E U) vote on September 14, 2022. Excerpts from Birdlife Europe’s statement follow: “The E U missed an opportunity to end support for wood burning. The Parliament missed the chance to end support for burning forest biomass and missed the chance to redirect misguided subsidies to real renewable energy sources. The results mean that the burning of forest wood as a source of renewable energy to E U Member States will continue in some ways. Forests, which are important carbon reservoirs, are cut down for combustion in power plants. While the outcome of the vote introduces some positives, such as the end of subsidies for burning wood in electricity-only installations, this is undermined by huge loopholes: for example, wood burning can still be supported in electricity-only power plants if these cannot easily be converted to combined heat and power. In addition, the combustion of primary woody biomass, for example, wood directly from the forest, not residues from sawmills or waste, will continue to count towards targets for renewable energies, up to a cap. This is in direct conflict with the recommendation of the European Parliament’s Environment Committee. BirdLife Europe welcomes that the Parliament advocated significantly higher targets for renewable energy than the EU Commission’s original draft; namely 45% by 2030 instead of the original 32%. In the forthcoming trilogue negotiations between the E U Council and Parliament, loopholes must be removed and the misguided support for wood burning must be ended.”