



Joint Press release Oeko-Institut and Symbio 2.0

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New platform sheds light on the bioeconomy

Harnessing innovation to build a bio-based, climate-neutral and circular economy – that is the goal of Germany's National Bioeconomy Strategy. But is Germany on track, and does development align with the overarching Sustainable Development Goals? The use of biomass can lead to trade-offs that are not always obvious, especially if problems are shifted abroad or over time. Monitoring is needed to uncover the links between consumption practices in Germany and impacts (environmental and social) across both the planet and time. The new platform – monitoring-bioökonomie.de – bundles knowledge on bioeconomy in Germany in straightforward graphics and overview summaries to explore this question.

"We show where and when the prefix 'bio' actually means progress," explains Prof. Dr. Stefan Bringezu, coordinator of the Symbio 2.0 project, which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

Origin, use and sustainability

Where does biomass come from, how much is used, and for what? What are the potentials, trends and drivers? What types of competition and conflict block progress – and how can they be avoided to make biomass use more sustainable? How big are the footprints of the German bioeconomy? These and other questions are considered in an understandable, scientifically-robust and balanced way at monitoring-bioeconomy.org. In addition, visitors to the website can set parameters and interact with the data themselves to explore trends.

In the project, Oeko-Institut identifies indicators for agriculture and forestry in Germany that are suitable for depicting the influences of the bioeconomy. For forests, for example, these are carbon sequestration, tree species composition and deadwood stock. For agricultural land, indicators such as nutrient leaching, the development of soil carbon and the diversity of cultivated crops are effective. For these indicators, results from existing modelling studies in agriculture and forestry are compiled and expected corridors for the development of the indicators are described.

"The focus of our work is on looking into the future, because it is important to assess whether undesirable developments in biomass use are to be expected and whether the political framework conditions of the bioeconomy need to be readjusted," summarises Dr Klaus Hennenberg, an expert on the bioeconomy at the Oeko-Institut.

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Bioenergy: Holistic overview

From case studies in remote sensing to footprint analysis, the SYMOBIO research team applies multiple methods (www.monitoring-bioeconomy.org/en/tools) to assess Germany's bioeconomy transition. The website is built on more than five years of research from within the SYMOBIO consortium, together with key results from current monitoring projects and pivotal studies from within Germany, the EU and at a global level. Combined, these sources depict the state-of-the-art of the research landscape and portray a holistic perspective. Both opportunities and risks are weighed in a balanced way.

Knowledge transfer for policy makers

The target audience is non-scientists. "The new website breaks down complex data into easily-understood graphics and key messages. In this way, it builds a bridge between science and all stakeholders," emphasises Dr. Meghan Beck-O'Brien, coordinator of the website content. The aim of the website is to support policy makers and other decision-makers with scientific expertise. The website provides key insights for the development of new strategies such as the National Biomass Strategy (NABIS), which is currently being developed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV).

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About Oeko-Institut e.V.

Oeko-Institut is a leading independent European research and consultancy institute working for a sustainable future. Founded in 1977, the institute develops principles and strategies for ways in which the vision of sustainable

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development can be realised globally, nationally and locally. It has offices in three cities in Germany: Freiburg, Darmstadt and Berlin.

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About Symbio 2.0

Symbio 2.0 project is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. It combines input from a larger bioeconomy monitoring research initiative with complementary projects against the background of the German Bioeconomy Strategy which is pursued in cooperation between BMBF, BMEL, BMWK, and BMUV.

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