
‘There won’t be enough for everyone’. What methanisation policy(ies) in a context of restricted access to biomass?

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Abstract

The methanisation sector has been promoted by public institutions in France since the 2000s. The first units, built by breeders, were initially small-scale, located on farms or close to farm buildings and based on a closed circular system for supplying and using the energy produced. However, the fact that methanisation has become an integral part of public policy on energy and climate change since 2010 has transformed the way the sector is structured. The increasing number of units and the trend towards larger units raise questions about the availability of the biomass required. Questions are being asked about the sustainability of the almost systematic use of dedicated crops and intermediate crops for energy purposes, about the categories of economic players who have a legitimate claim to sectoral leadership, about the territorial roots of economic cooperation and exchanges of flows (inputs, digestates and biogas), and about the hierarchy of biomass uses (food, livestock, methanisation, other economic sectors). Using our sociological and political science analysis, we aim to clarify the interplay of players, the coalitions mobilised, the perceptions and antagonistic futures, and the configurations and arrangements at work between the political, economic and administrative fields.

Keywords: Methanisation, Biogaz, Biomass, Public policy, Crops, Energy, Agriculture

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