



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

New biomass sustainability requirements for the Renewable Heat Incentive

As the renewable heat market grows, we need to make sure support for biomass is sustainable. New sustainability criteria for the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) will make sure biomass meets the Government's carbon and environmental objectives, ensuring that support delivers value for money. This will affect domestic and non-domestic RHI participants; producers and traders of biomass fuels.



What the criteria are:

1. Biomass fuel used by RHI participants must meet a lifecycle **greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions target** of 34.8g CO₂ equivalent per MJ of heat, or 60% GHG savings against the EU fossil fuel average.
2. **Land Criteria:** we plan for biomass fuel to meet land criteria, which will differ for different types of biomass:
 - For woodfuel: the criteria are outlined in the UK Timber Standard for Heat and Electricity: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/timber-standard-for-heat-electricity>
 - For other types of biomass: we intend that land criteria will correspond to the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) for transport biofuels and bioliquids. Energy crops which have been assessed as meeting the requirements of the Energy Crops Scheme or equivalent will be deemed to meet land criteria

When the criteria will apply

The biomass sustainability criteria came into force on 5 February 2015, and will be mandatory from 5 October 2015.

What this means for RHI participants

All RHI participants using biomass feedstocks in their installation will need to comply with the sustainability requirements from 5 October 2015.

For the non-domestic scheme

There are two methods to meet the sustainability criteria & participants can switch between them:

1. Sourcing woodfuel from the Biomass Suppliers List (BSL), and providing Ofgem with a quarterly declaration that the biomass fuel they have used was registered on the BSL and marked as sustainable. The BSL has been open to consumers from September 2014, allowing consumers to use an online search tool to find authorised fuels near them.
2. Self-reporting to Ofgem on the sustainability of their fuel. This will involve making a quarterly declaration to Ofgem on whether or not fuel used in that quarter meets the GHG and land sustainability criteria, and providing an annual independent sustainability audit report on biomass used in that reporting year.

Installations under 1MW capacity will be able to use the default GHG emissions values outlined in the [European Commission's report](#) on biomass sustainability (with the exception of biomethane to grid and process heat installations above 1MW). Alternatively, operators can use actual values. Participants are recommended to use the [UK Solid and Gaseous Biomass and Biogas Carbon Calculator](#) to calculate lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions.

RHI payments can be withheld for any consignment that does not meet the criteria.

For the domestic scheme

All fuel used from 5 October 2015 must be sourced from a supplier registered on the BSL. Participants are required to make an annual declaration to Ofgem that the biomass fuel used meets this requirement.

All participants are strongly encouraged to start sourcing from a BSL supplier in advance of the criteria coming into force.

Self-suppliers (domestic and non-domestic)

Some participants may wish to self-supply their own woodfuel and register on the on the BSL as a 'self-supplier'.

Participants can be defined as a self-supplier if their installation is less than 1MWth capacity, and if they source fuel (which they have the legal right to source, through ownership, rental or other relevant arrangement) from an area no further than 50 miles from the boiler in which the fuel is used.

Self-suppliers will also be able to source waste woodfuel from outside their Estate for use in their installation.

Self-suppliers will make declarations to Ofgem that they are registered as a self-supplier as per the BSL compliance method outlined above.

Self-suppliers do not need to show that they comply with the sustainability criteria but will need to demonstrate their ability to self-supply, by providing evidence such as a Forest Management Plan or Felling Licences.

Waste feedstocks (including manure and slurry) will be deemed to meet the criteria, although participants will still be required to report against waste consignments (or, in the case of woodfuel, will be able to use a BSL approved supplier).

What if I buy raw materials and process them into fuel for use myself (and possibly also to sell to others)?

If you wish to use the BSL to demonstrate compliance with the RHI sustainability criteria, you should register on the BSL as a producer-trader (you are not a self-supplier if you are buying in the raw materials from elsewhere) – please see the [BSL Q & A](#) for more information.

What this means for producers and traders of woodfuel

Producers and traders of woodfuel who wish to access the growing RHI market are recommended to register on the BSL in good time ahead of the criteria coming into force on 5 October 2015. The application process will be online, and by telephone or postal service by request. Small and micro enterprises¹ can use a new simple calculator developed specifically to ensure that the BSL application process is proportionate to the needs of small businesses. Larger enterprises will be able to use the UK Solid and Gaseous Biomass and Biogas Carbon Calculator to calculate the greenhouse gas emissions associated with their fuel.

BSL traders' contact details will be available for customers to access, with the option of also listing whether or not the fuel has a quality standard such as EN Plus (although please note that having a quality standard is not a requirement for accreditation to the BSL).

Producers and traders signing up to the BSL will be required to agree to the BSL Terms and Conditions and will be subject to a desk or site based audit by the BSL Administrator.

How to Register

- To apply to register on the BSL list, please visit <http://www.gov.uk/register-biomass-supplier> or you can contact the BSL Administrator via telephone or email

Phone: 020 7090 7769

Email: bslhelpdesk@gemserv.com

Further information can be found in the [BSL Applications and Audit Guidance](#) document.

Producers, suppliers and RHI participants wishing to register their interest in BSL progress can email rhi@decc.gsi.gov.uk

¹ As defined in EU Law: [EU Recommendation 2003/361](#)