

**Wood to electricity, and comparison to photovoltaic production**

a)

Using a photosynthetic efficiency of 0.6% from a yearly mean irradiation of 140 W/m<sup>2</sup> (Switzerland), how much dry wood (average density 0.56 kg/m<sup>3</sup>) is grown every year renewably in all Swiss forest (=11'000 km<sup>2</sup> = 26% of the total country area) ? (use LHV<sub>dry</sub> of 17 MJ/kg)

Exploiting this wood via combustion and steam cycles into electricity with a conversion of 20% (10 MWth plants), how much electricity can this generate annually?

$$140 \text{ W/m}^2 * 0.6\% = 0.84 \text{ W/m}^2$$

$$0.84 \text{ W/m}^2 * 11 \cdot 10^9 \text{ m}^2 = 9.24 \text{ GW}$$

$$9.24 \text{ GW} * (3600 * 24 * 365.25) = 292 \text{ PJ}$$

LHV 17 MJ/kg

$$\text{Hence } 292 \text{ PJ} / 17 \text{ MJ/kg} \rightarrow 17 \cdot 10^9 \text{ kg} = 33 \text{ mio m}^3 \text{ (with density } 0.56 \text{ kg/m}^3)$$

$$292 \text{ PJ} * 20\% \text{ electrical efficiency} = 58 \text{ PJ} = 16.2 \text{ TWhe}$$

This is 25% of Swiss electrical generation of 65 TWhe.

In reality only around 5 million m<sup>3</sup> of wood is recovered from Swiss woods every year, more for construction than energy purposes, and for very little electricity generation.

b)

Using the solar irradiation in photovoltaic panels (20% efficient) installed on all ~138 km<sup>2</sup> well oriented roof surface (Switzerland), how much solar electricity can this generate ?

$$140 \text{ W/m}^2 * 138 \cdot 10^6 \text{ m}^2 * 20\% \text{ efficiency} = 3.864 \text{ GW}$$

$$3.864 \text{ GW} * (24 * 365.25) = 33.9 \text{ TWh}$$

This is over half of Swiss electrical generation (65 TWh).

c)

Compare and comment both options. In Switzerland annual electricity generation is around 65 TWhe.

The forest area (11'000 km<sup>2</sup>) is 80 times larger than the available PV panel area (138 km<sup>2</sup>) for photonic capture for the whole country. However, capture efficiency of solar irradiation is (20%/0.6%)=33 times more efficient with direct PV than for biomass fuel storage, and biomass fuel to electrical conversion loses another factor of 5 (20%). In the end, PV-electricity production is then (33 x 5 = 167 times efficiency advantage, to 80 area disadvantage) 2 times larger than wood-electricity (33 TWhe vs 16 TWhe). Another conclusion is that 1 m<sup>2</sup> (6 m<sup>2</sup>) of PV panel is equal to 167 m<sup>2</sup> (1000 m<sup>2</sup>) of forest for the same annual electricity generation, based on the numbers used.