

August 14, 2024

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Room 200-A  
Jamie L. Whitten Building  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We, the undersigned forestry associations representing forest landowners, loggers, state foresters, and the forest industry, stress the importance of having diverse markets for the full spectrum of forest products including sawlogs, pulpwood and biomass. Collectively, our members manage private forestlands of this nation, sustainably harvest forest products, and are the primary employers in many rural areas.

Having robust opportunities for utilizing forest-based products helps tremendously in keeping forests as forests and ensuring the environmental and economic benefits of this nation's renewable and sustainable forests. Utilizing all products generated from timber management increases efficiency and helps meet the demands of a growing population. It also helps improve forest health, reducing the risk and severity of wildfires, insects, and disease.

Our interest in biomass stems from the understanding that the practice of sustainable forestry depends on diverse and robust markets for forest products – particularly for harvest residues and low-grade or poor-quality materials generated as a by-product of timber harvesting. It also helps to address climate change issues by displacing fossil fuels with biogenic, carbon-beneficial biomass and reducing the incidence of catastrophic wildfires.

Biomass can be an energy source for almost all applications, including:

- *Thermal energy* – used to heat spaces or for industrial applications, e.g., community buildings, forest product manufacturers facilities, or homes in rural areas
- *Electricity* – used to provide power to homes and businesses via the utility grid or directly and
- *Transportation fuels* – used to power cars, trucks, trains, ships, planes and other transport.

Utilizing forest products, including biomass, provides important markets for low-grade wood, often associated with timber sales, and offers a range of benefits, including:

- *Local economic benefits* – biomass is sourced locally and is processed or consumed near where it is generated, providing significant economic benefits to rural areas;
- *Energy security and price stability* – biomass is a price-stable energy source, not subject to wild swings as seen in global markets for commodity fossil fuels. Because it is generated domestically, it provides the user and the nation with a secure, local energy source;
- *Forest management opportunities* – markets for a full range of forest products support sustainable forest management. By having markets for cull, off-species or off-specification stems, diseased or damaged material, slash, and other low-grade wood, foresters and

landowners are able to conduct responsible timber harvesting that supports healthy and productive forests;

- *Markets for residuals* – When sawmills turn logs into lumber, significant volumes of mill residues – chips, sawdust, and bark – are generated. Having diverse and dispersed markets for this material supports the operation of mills, which provide a critical market for forest landowners. Biomass markets – of all types – can and do support sawmill operations and the critical markets those mills provide;
- *Forest industry supply chain* – markets for biomass support the landowners, loggers, truckers, and others that grow, harvest, and transport forest products.

We encourage you to continue the USDA Forest Service’s support for a full range of forest products supporting a viable forest industry in the rural communities where they operate and take lead in developing markets for biomass generated from actively managing forestlands. This will provide significant economic and environmental benefits while securing and diversifying the country’s energy portfolio and supporting healthy, resilient forests for thousands of forest landowners, loggers, and industry workers across this nation.

Thank you.



Tim O’Hara  
Interim President  
Forest Resources Association

Cc: The Honorable Homer Wilkes, Under Secretary -Natural Resources and Environment  
Chief Randy Moore, USDA-Forest Service

**Signatories:**

1. Alabama Forestry Association
2. Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group
3. American Loggers Council
4. American Walnut Manufacturers Association
5. Arkansas Forestry Association
6. Arkansas Timber Producers Association
7. Associated Logging Contractors, Inc. – Idaho
8. Association of Consulting Foresters
9. California Forestry Association
10. Decorative Hardwoods Association
11. Empire State Forest Products
12. Florida Forestry Association
13. Forest Resources Association

14. Forestry Association of South Carolina
15. Georgia Forestry Association
16. Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association
17. Hardwood Federation
18. Louisiana Forestry Association
19. Louisiana Logging Council
20. Maine Forest Products Council
21. Maple Flooring Manufacturers Association
22. Maryland Forests Association
23. Massachusetts Forest Alliance
24. Minnesota Forest Industries
25. Minnesota Timber Producers Association
26. Mississippi Forestry Association
27. Missouri Forest Products Association
28. Montana Wood Products Association
29. National Alliance of Forest Owners
30. National Association of State Foresters
31. National Hardwood Lumber Association
32. National Wood Flooring Association
33. National Wooden Pallet & Container Association
34. National Woodland Owners Association
35. North Carolina Forestry Association
36. Northeastern Loggers Association
37. Ohio Forestry Association
38. Oregon Women in Timber
39. Pellet Fuels Institute
40. Pennsylvania Forestry Association
41. Pennsylvania Forest Products Association
42. Railway Tie Association
43. Society of American Foresters
44. South Carolina Timber Producers Association
45. Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association

46. Southern Forest Products Association
47. Southern Loggers Cooperative
48. Tennessee Forestry Association
49. Texas Forestry Association
50. Treated Wood Council
51. Virginia Forestry Association
52. West Virginia Forestry Association
53. Western Wood Preservers Institute
54. Wood Industry Association
55. US Industrial Pellet Association