

Three questions to NOVA

Interview with Nadja Wulff from nova-Institute and Christopher vom Berg from the Renewable Carbon Initiative



What is the Biomass Utilisation Factor, and why do you believe it is a fitting indicator within context of the BioReCer project?

The **Biomass Utilisation Factor (BUF)** is a metric that quantifies to which extent (production efficiency) and how often (cascading use) biomass is utilised in a bio-based product value chain or in an entire sector. A higher BUF indicates a more efficient use of biomass, due to multiple uses, minimised waste and/or greater output of valuable products.

The **BioReCer project** is focused on enhancing the certification, traceability, and sustainability of bio-based products. Within this context, the BUF provides a relevant circularity indicator as a critical, so far often less considered aspect of sustainability. By implementing the BUF in existing certification schemes a contribution can be made to ensure that biomass resources not only meet environmental and sustainability standards but are also used more efficiently. This aligns with the project's goal of contributing to the European Green Deal's target of achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

Where is the connection between cascading use principles and sustainability?

The **cascading use principles** refer to the strategy of prioritising the use of biomass in a sequence of applications that maximise its value before eventually utilising it a final time for energy production or complete disposal. The connection between these principles and **sustainability** lies in the efficient and responsible management of natural resources, which is crucial for reducing environmental impact and promoting a circular economy. It also contributes to reducing dependency on fossil-based resources, which is a key objective in achieving climate goals like those outlined in the European Green Deal. Additionally, cascading use can promote economic sustainability by creating multiple revenue streams from the same biomass input, fostering innovation and resilience in bio-based industries.

Can you paint us a picture how the BUF could be implemented in policy?

Implementing the Biomass Utilisation Factor (BUF) in policy could significantly enhance the sustainability and efficiency of biomass usage across industries. Here's how it could be integrated into policy frameworks:

1. **Integration into Certifications:** Governments could incorporate BUF as a circularity indicator into sustainability certifications for bio-based products. This would increase efficient biomass use, making the most out of limited resources.
2. **Sustainability Legislation:** BUF could be embedded in sustainability policies to incorporate a circularity indicator that reflects on efficient biomass use in a cascading sequence to promote resource efficiency and maximise value. A feasible example might be the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation.
3. **Incentive Programs:** Policymakers could introduce financial incentives, such as tax benefits or grants, for companies that achieve high circularity/BUF scores. This would motivate industries to adopt practices that maximise biomass efficiency and minimise waste.
4. **Monitoring and Reporting:** Industries could be required to report their circularity/BUF metrics regularly, e.g. in context of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). This would enable governments to track progress toward circularity targets and increase transparency.
5. **Support for Innovation:** Funding and incentives for R&D could be provided to improve circularity/BUF across industries. Innovations in processing technologies and recycling could enhance biomass utilisation, driving both environmental and economic benefits.

By embedding BUF into these areas, it could become a valuable tool for promoting efficient biomass use, contributing to broader environmental goals like reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting a circular economy.