Handling, storage and large-scale co-firing of torrefied biomass pellets

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5th IEA CCC Workshop on Cofiring Biomass with Coal
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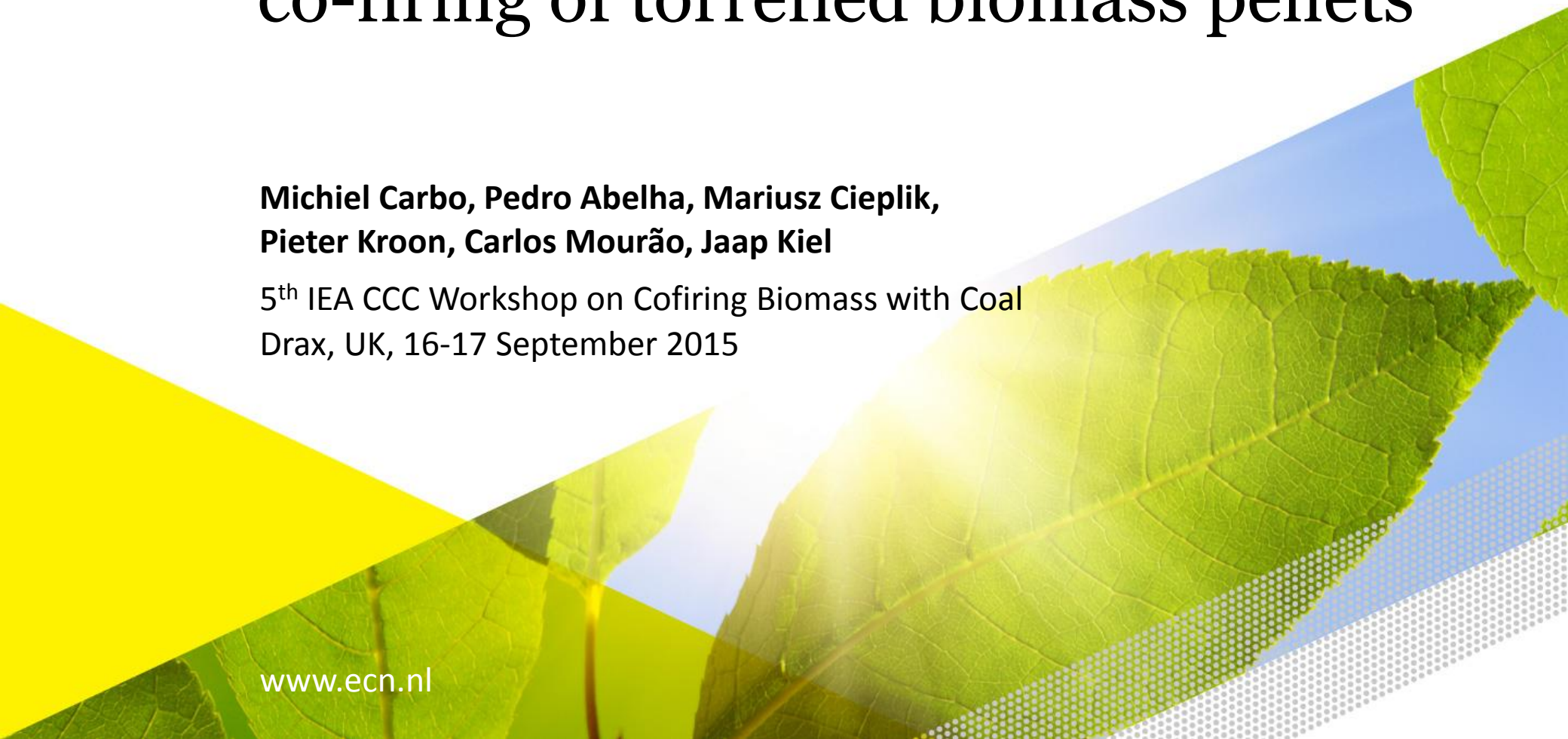


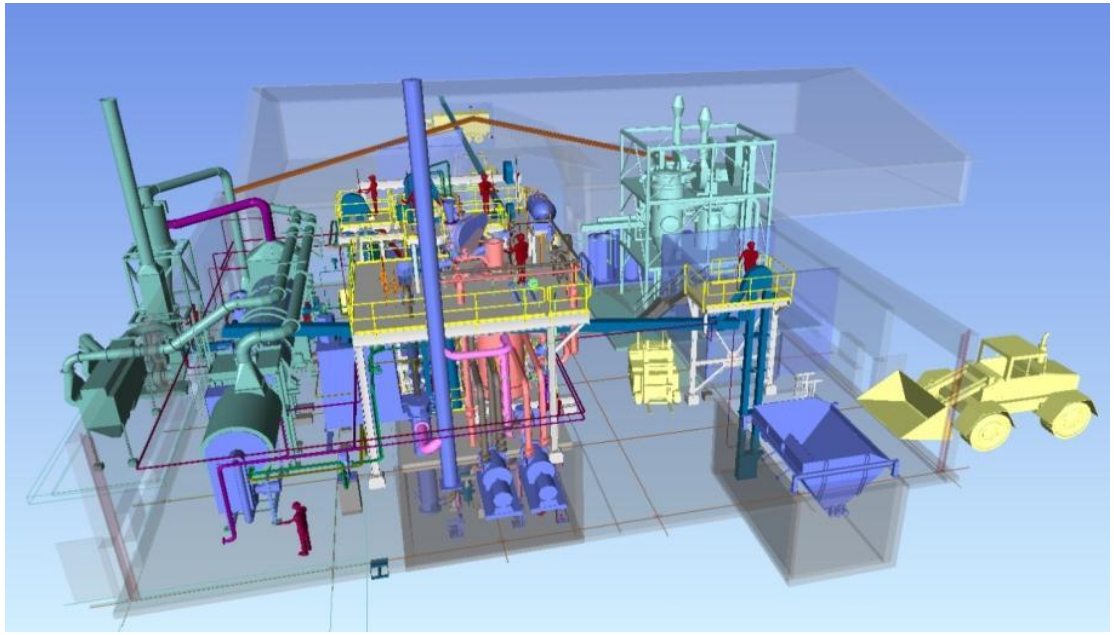
ECN and Torrefaction

- 20 years experience in biomass co-firing R&D, identified the potential of torrefaction and played a pioneering role in adapting torrefaction to bioenergy applications since 2002
- ECN's torrefaction technology proven on pilot-scale and demonstration scale; Andritz ready for market introduction
- Contract R&D for industry to assess the torrefaction potential of specific feedstocks, produce test batches and independently assess product quality

ECN 50 kg/h torrefaction pilot-plant

Technology licensed to Andritz

- Industrial demo plant in Sønder Stenderup, Denmark
  - Operational since 2012
  - Capacity 1 ton/hour torrefied pellets
- ECN involved in commissioning, start-up and operation



Torrefaction demo plant

- Demo plant comprises pre-drying, torrefaction and pelletisation
- Blends ECN and Andritz technologies
- Torrefaction pressurized for more effective heat transfer, reduction of equipment sizes
- Torrefaction reactor contains separate zones for final drying and torrefaction
- Torrefaction reactor design suitable to scale up to large single unit capacities
- All individual equipment units built at large-scale

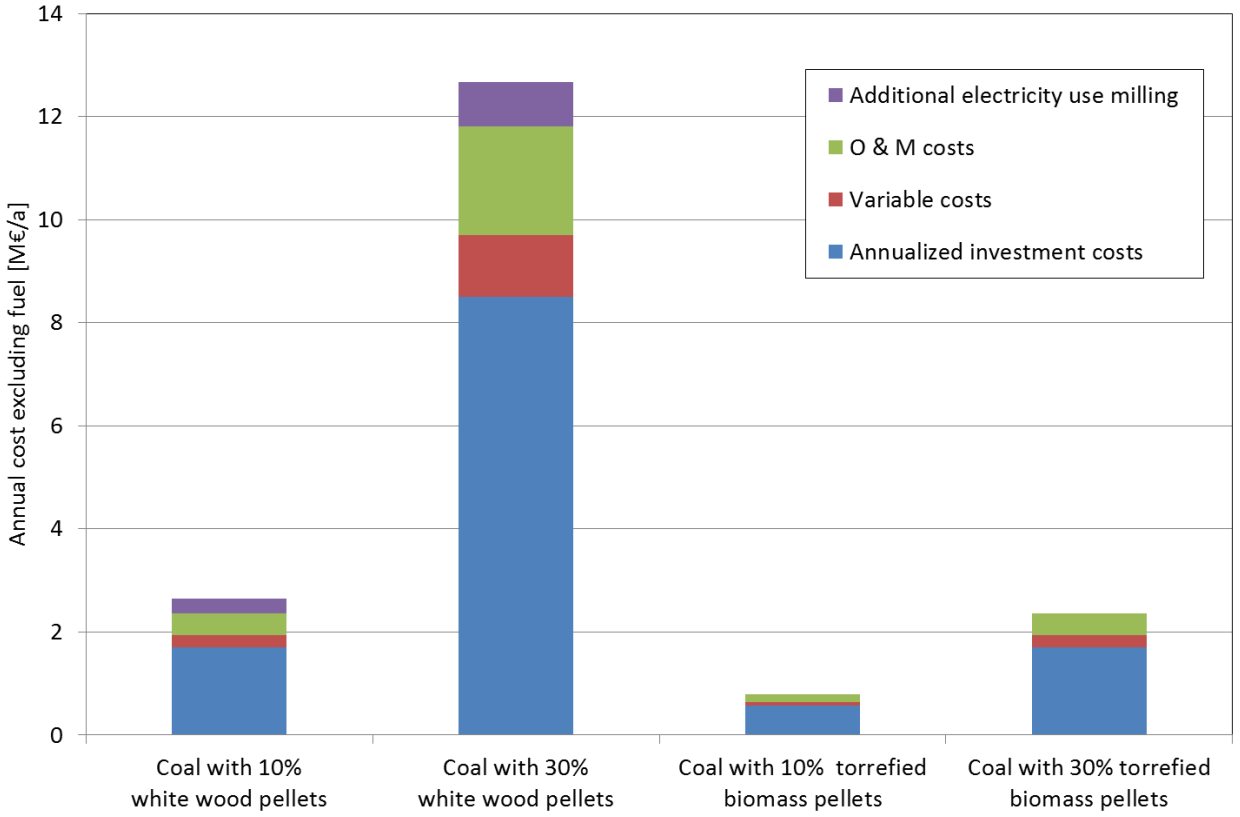
Torrefaction section of the demo plant

Torrefaction demo plant

Mapping torrefied biomass pellet characteristics

Why torrefaction?

- Annual costs excluding fuel costs white wood pellets vs. torrefied wood pellets in different co-firing scenarios:



- 400 MW_e
- 10 and 30% co-firing (e-basis)
- 6,000 operating hours
- Annuity: 14%
- Economic lifetime: 10 years

Purchasing power

- Torrefied wood pellets particularly interesting to establish increased co-firing ratios at power plants without co-firing infrastructure (or with limited shares)

- White wood pellet price of 150 €/ton or 30 €/MWh

		10% co-firing	30% co-firing
Annual cost difference: white wood pellets minus torrefied wood pellets	M€/y	1.86	10.31
Pellets used	PJ/y	2.16	6.48
Acceptable price difference for torrefied wood pellets	**€/GJ (€/MWh)**	**0.86 (3.10)**	**1.59 (5.72)**
Case 1: price difference at higher rate of return (12% → 15%)	€/GJ (€/MWh)	1.08 (3.89)	2.02 (7.27)
Case 2: price difference at reduction of economic lifetime from 10 to 5 years	€/GJ (€/MWh)	1.24 (4.46)	2.34 (8.42)

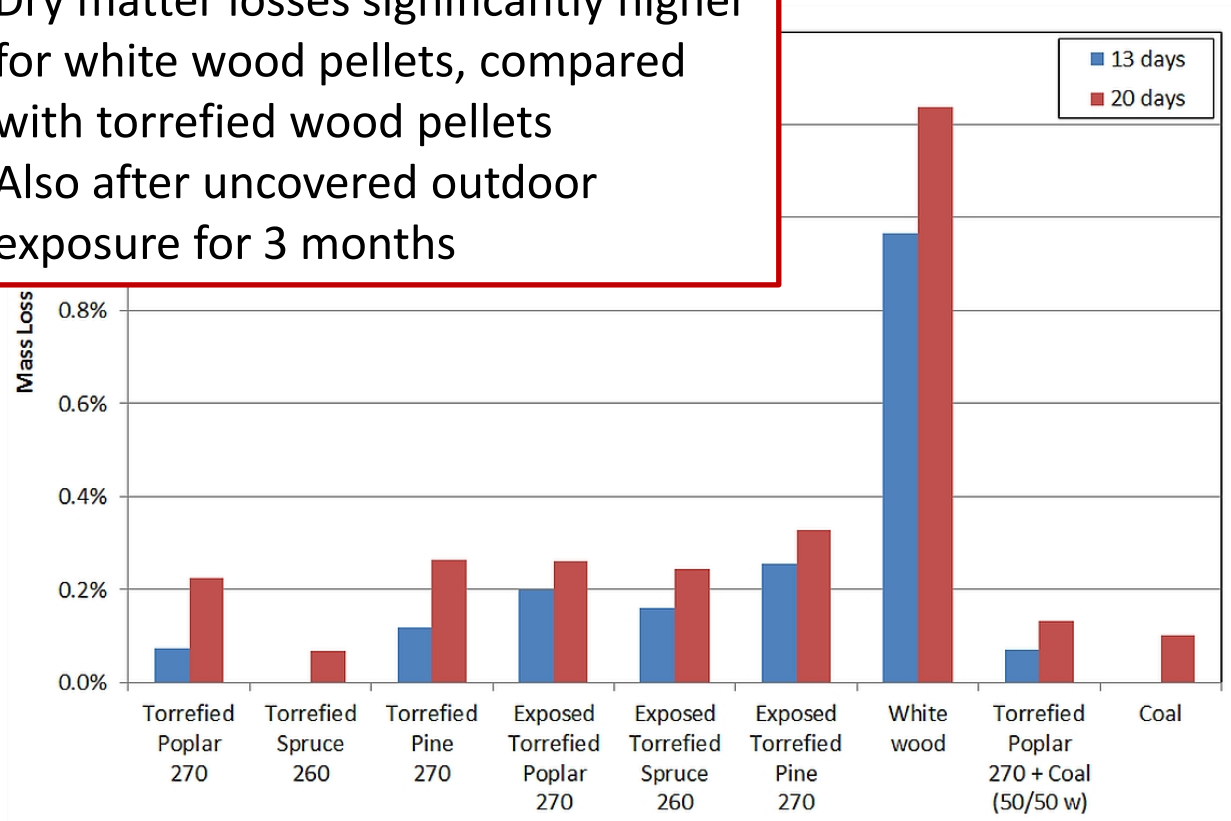
Small-scale outdoor storage

- High pellet durability essential for improved weather resistance in time
- Slight degradation outer surface; inner content pile intact

Biological degradation

Pellets stored 20 days at 20 °C at 95% relative humidity

- Dry matter losses significantly higher for white wood pellets, compared with torrefied wood pellets
- Also after uncovered outdoor exposure for 3 months



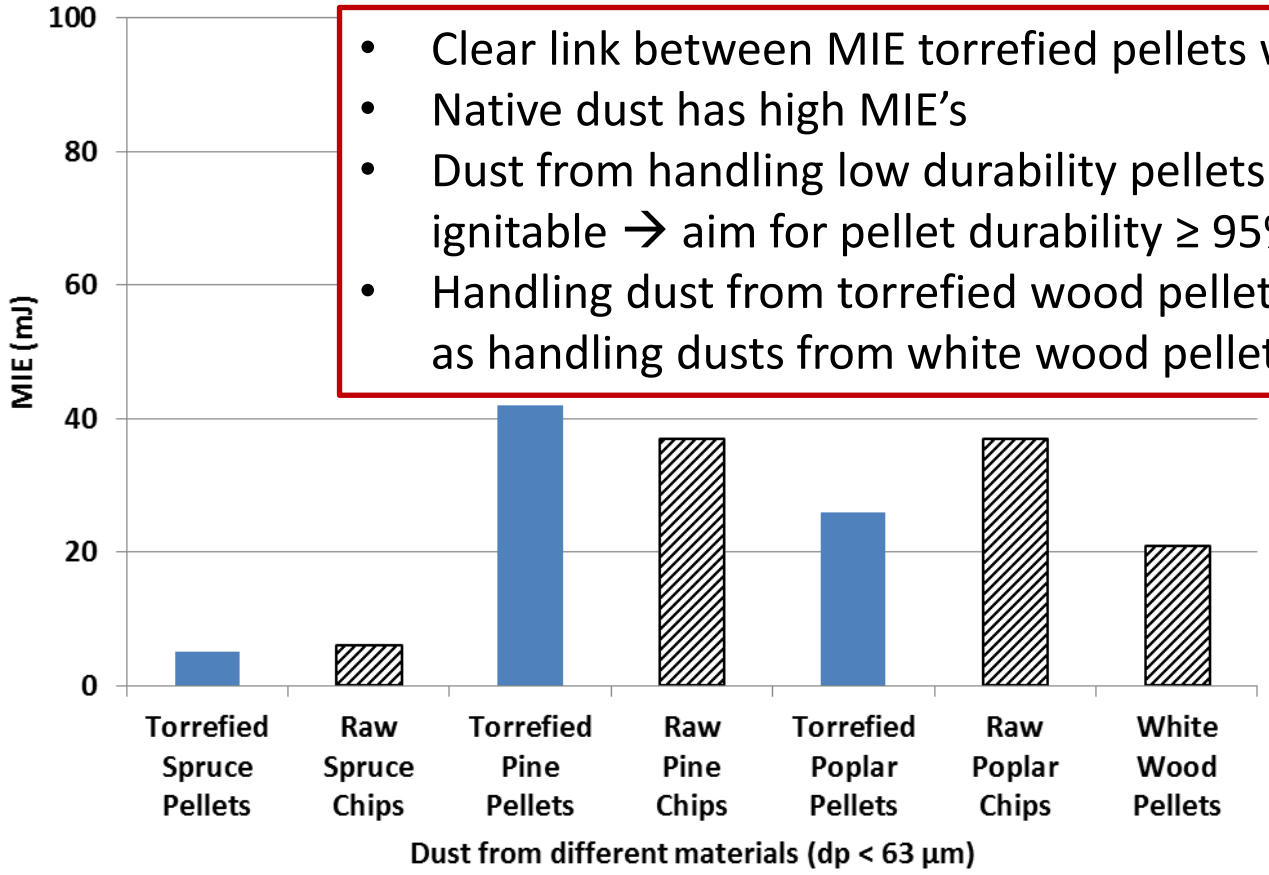
Source: Carbo et al. “Fuel pre-processing, pre-treatment and storage for co-firing of biomass and coal” in “Fuel Flexible Energy Generation” ed. J. Oakey, 2015

Durability and explosivity

- Durability (EN 15210)
  - Andritz/ECN demo pellets typically 96.5-98.0%
- Minimum ignition energy
  - Torrefied pellets were pulverised using disc impaction mill to replicate commercial roller mill
  - Fraction below 63 µm used in accordance with EN 13821
  - Andritz/ECN demo pellets have MIE's within 30-100 mJ range, both with and without inductance

Minimum Ignition Energy (MIE)

- Pulverised torrefied pellets vs. pulverised raw biomass chips (ind. off)

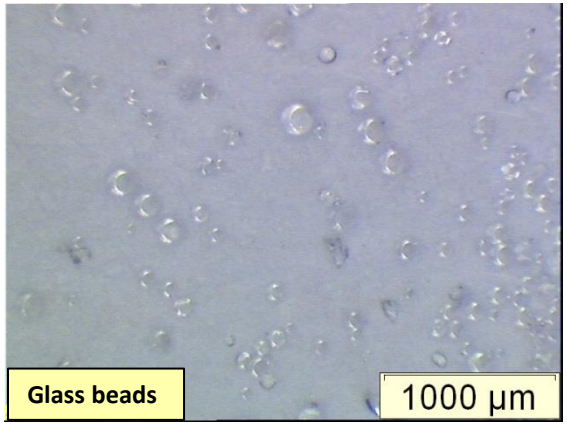


- Clear link between MIE torrefied pellets with MIE raw material
- Native dust has high MIE's
- Dust from handling low durability pellets (< 93%) is more ignitable → aim for pellet durability ≥ 95%
- Handling dust from torrefied wood pellets is equally ignitable as handling dusts from white wood pellets

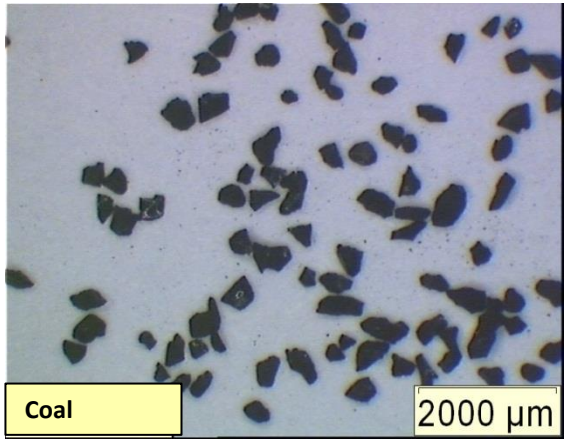
Source: Carbo et al. "Fuel pre-processing, pre-treatment and storage for co-firing of biomass and coal" in "Fuel Flexible Energy Generation" ed. J. Oakey, 2015

Fuel morphology after milling (1)

- Glass beads:

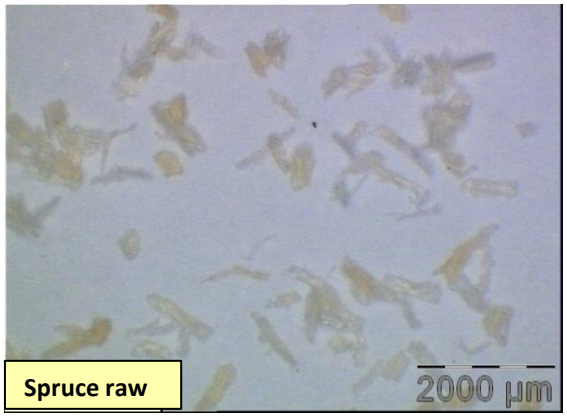


- Coal:

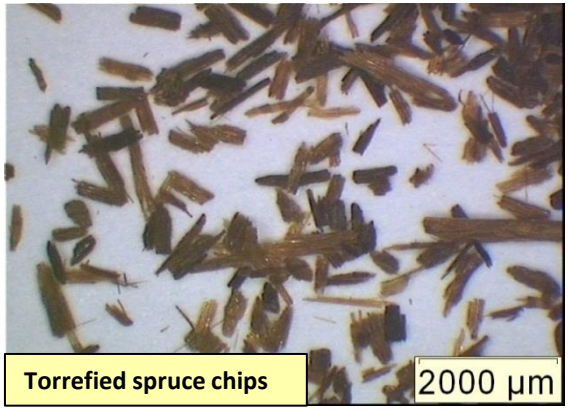


Fuel morphology after milling (2)

- Raw spruce:

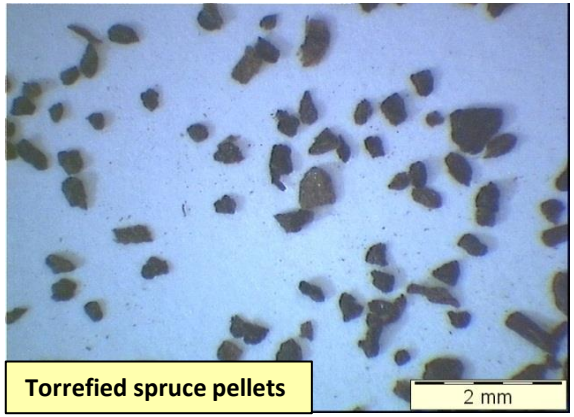


- Torrefied spruce chips:



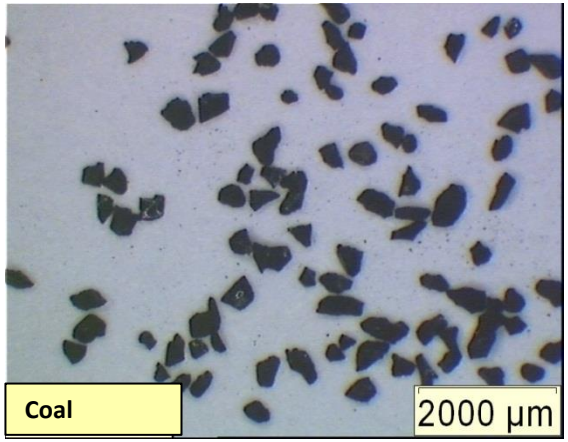
Fuel morphology after milling (3)

- Torrefied spruce pellets Andritz/ECN demo:



- Particle “sphericity” pulverised torrefied wood pellets comparable to pulverised coal

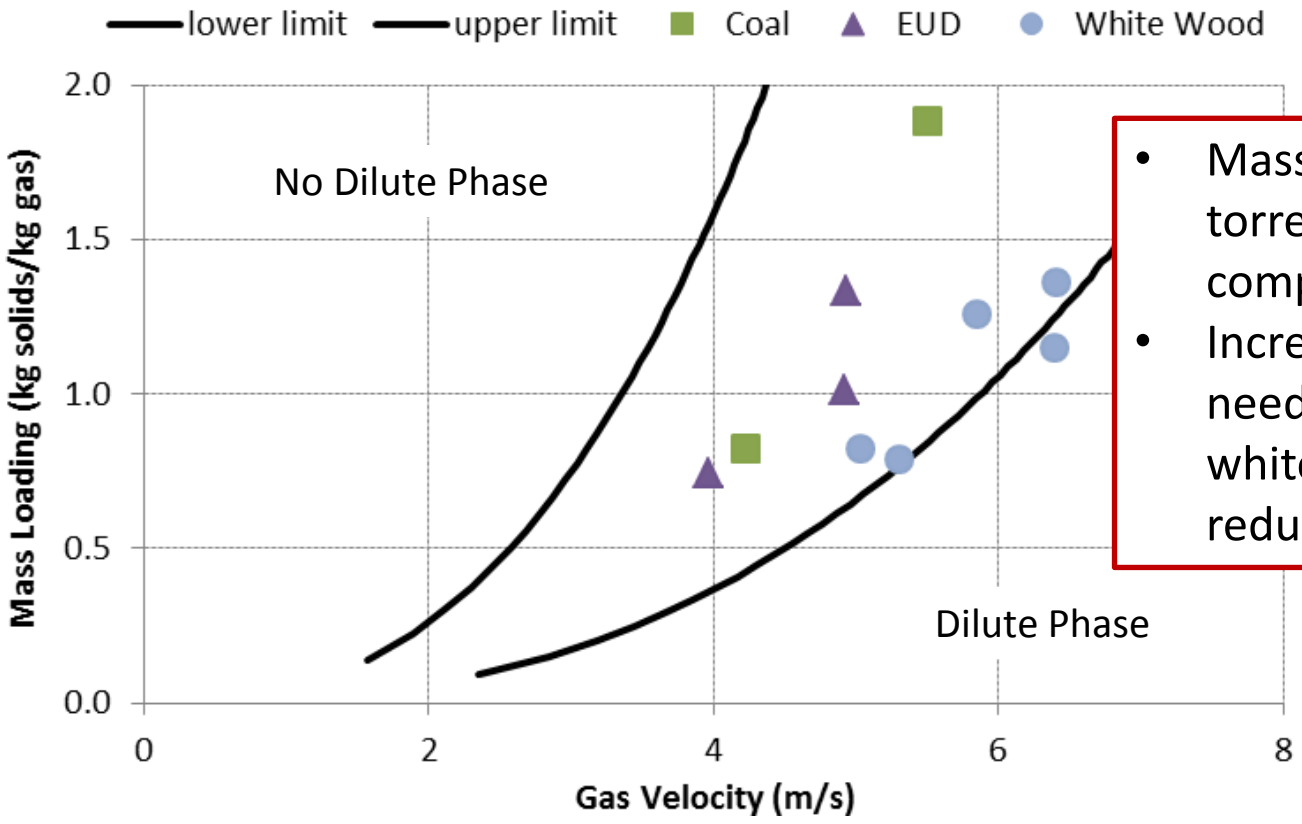
- Coal:



Pneumatic lean-phase transport (1)

- Fluidization tests to assess flowability
- Bulk densities pulverised torrefied pellets typically between 450-600 kg/m^3
- Bulk densities between 550-600 kg/m^3 display fluidization behavior similar to coal
- Setup used to determine solids loading/entrainment during dense/lean phase feeding

Pneumatic lean-phase transport (2)



- Mass loading of pulverised torrefied pellets comparable with coal
- Increased gas velocities needed for pulverised white wood pellets to reduce risk of saltation

Lower limit: saltation velocity coal; Upper limit: 1.6x saltation velocity coal
EUD: Torrefied eucalyptus pellets
Relatively low velocities in lab-scale setup result from tube diameter

Experience with torrefied biomass at industrial scale

NUON/Vattenfall Buggenum experience*

- Maximum 70% co-gasification on energy basis achieved at 90% nominal load without major modifications
- 1200 tons of torrefied pellets during 24 hours trial
- Observations:
  - Relatively low durability led to significant dust formation
  - Low durability disadvantageous during outdoor storage
  - Low Minimum Ignition Energy (MIE)

- ECN conducted lab-scale test programme to characterise pellets and provided consultancy to mitigate risks during commercial operation

* Source: N. Padban, Central European Biomass Conference, Jan ’14, Graz

RWE/Essent AMER-9 experience*

- Consortium of Topell, Essent, NUON, GdF Suez and ECN as part of Dutch TKI Pre-treatment Project
- Maximum 25 wt% co-milling on weight basis; 5 wt% co-firing
- 2300 tons of Topell torrefied pellets during November & December ‘13
- Observations:
  - No significant issues

- ECN conducted lab-scale characterisation of pellets and provided consultancy to mitigate risks during commercial operation

* Source: Press release Topell/Essent, Feb ‘14

RWE/Essent AMER-9 experience

DONG Studstrup-3 experience

- Two units with total capacity of 714 MW_e and 986 MW_{th}
- Dedicated milling on MPS roller mill adapted for either coal or white pellets
- 200 tons of Andritz/ECN torrefied spruce pellets during 8 hours trial
- Co-firing share: 33 wt%
- Observations:
  - No dust formation during unloading
  - Sufficiently high durability; no issues with dust formation in chain conveyors
  - Normal Minimum Ignition Energy (MIE)

- ECN conducted lab-scale characterisation of pellets

DONG Studstrup-3 experience

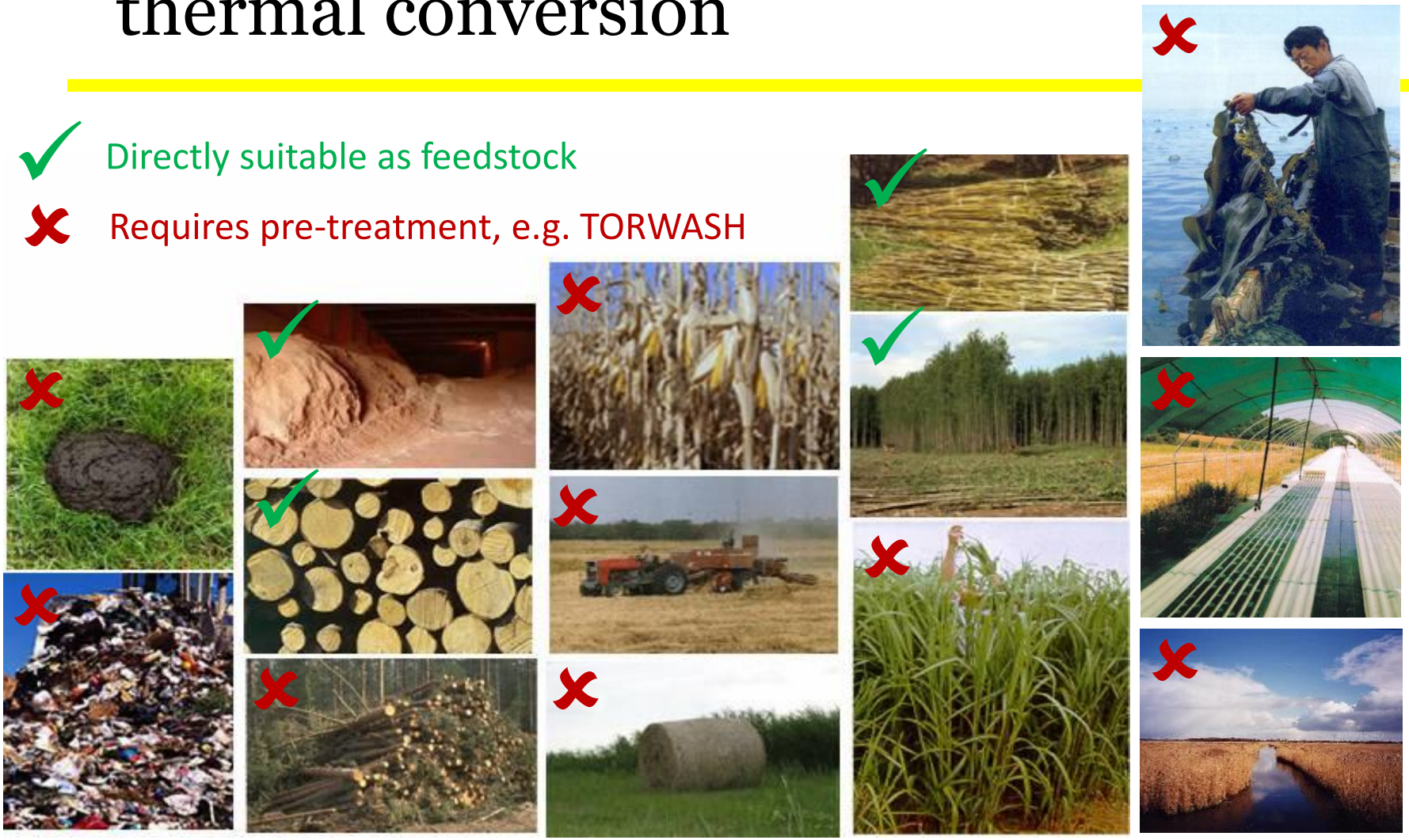
Upgrading of herbaceous biomass

Biomass feedstocks for thermal conversion

ECN

✓ Directly suitable as feedstock

✗ Requires pre-treatment, e.g. TORWASH



waste | wood | (agricultural) residues | energy corps | aquatic biomass

Combination of washing and torrefaction

- Torrefaction + Washing = TORWASH
  - upgrades low-grade feedstock into a commodity feedstock

- Combines advantages and eliminates disadvantages
  - Torrefaction → brittle structure
  - Salt removal → eases thermal conversion
  - Mechanical dewatering → higher efficiency

- Aim: maximum energy content and low mineral content in the solid phase
- Product: high value fuel as powder, pellets or briquettes
- By-product: biogas from fermentation of liquid residue

TORWASH Example: Arundo Donax (1)

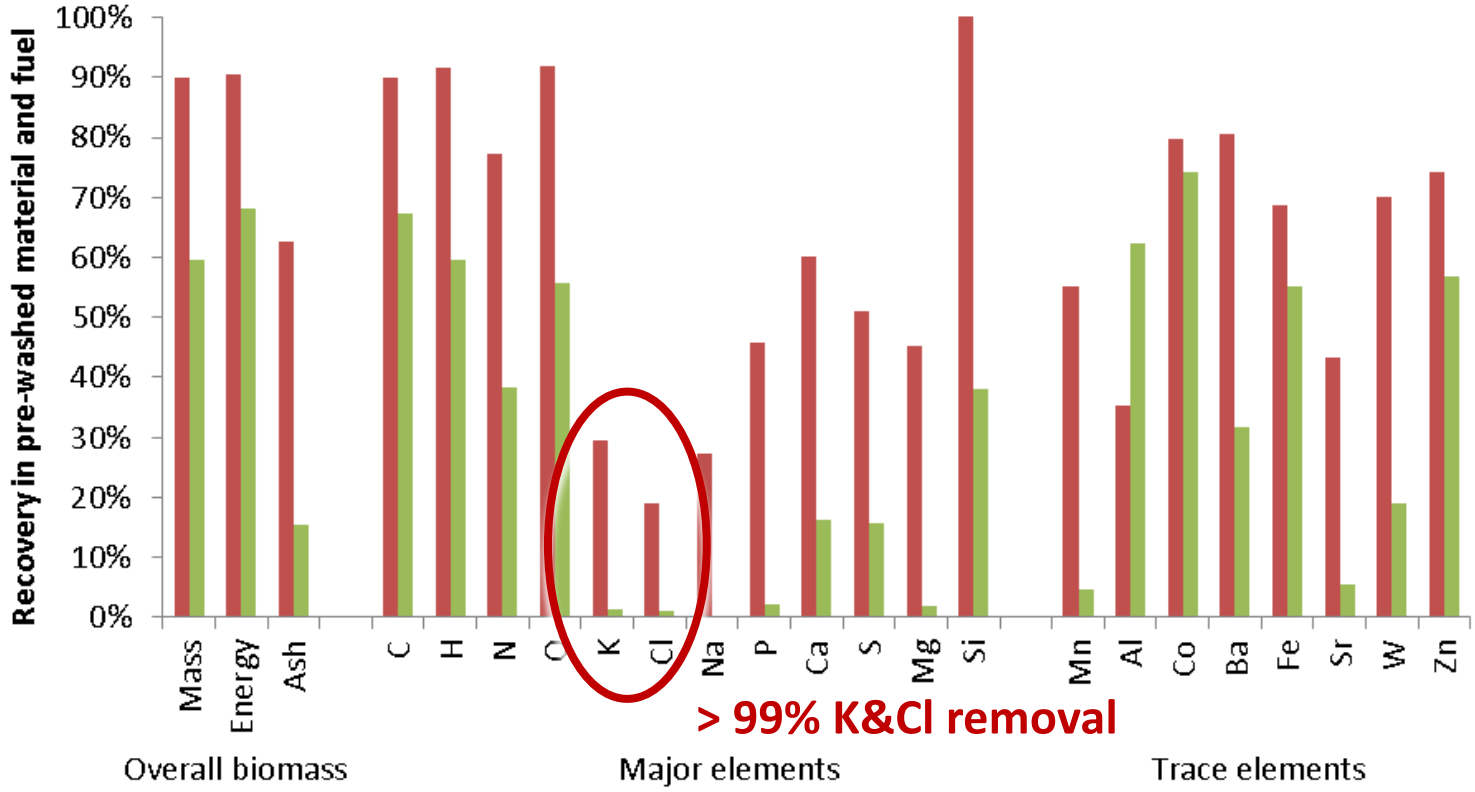
Arundo Donax/Giant Reed
Chopped

Arundo Donax/Giant Reed
Chopped and TORWASHed

Arundo Donax/Giant Reed
Chopped, TORWASHed and pelletised

TORWASH Example: Arundo Donax (2)

Presence of mass, energy, ash content and elements as function of feedstock, after pre-wash (red) and TORWASH (green)



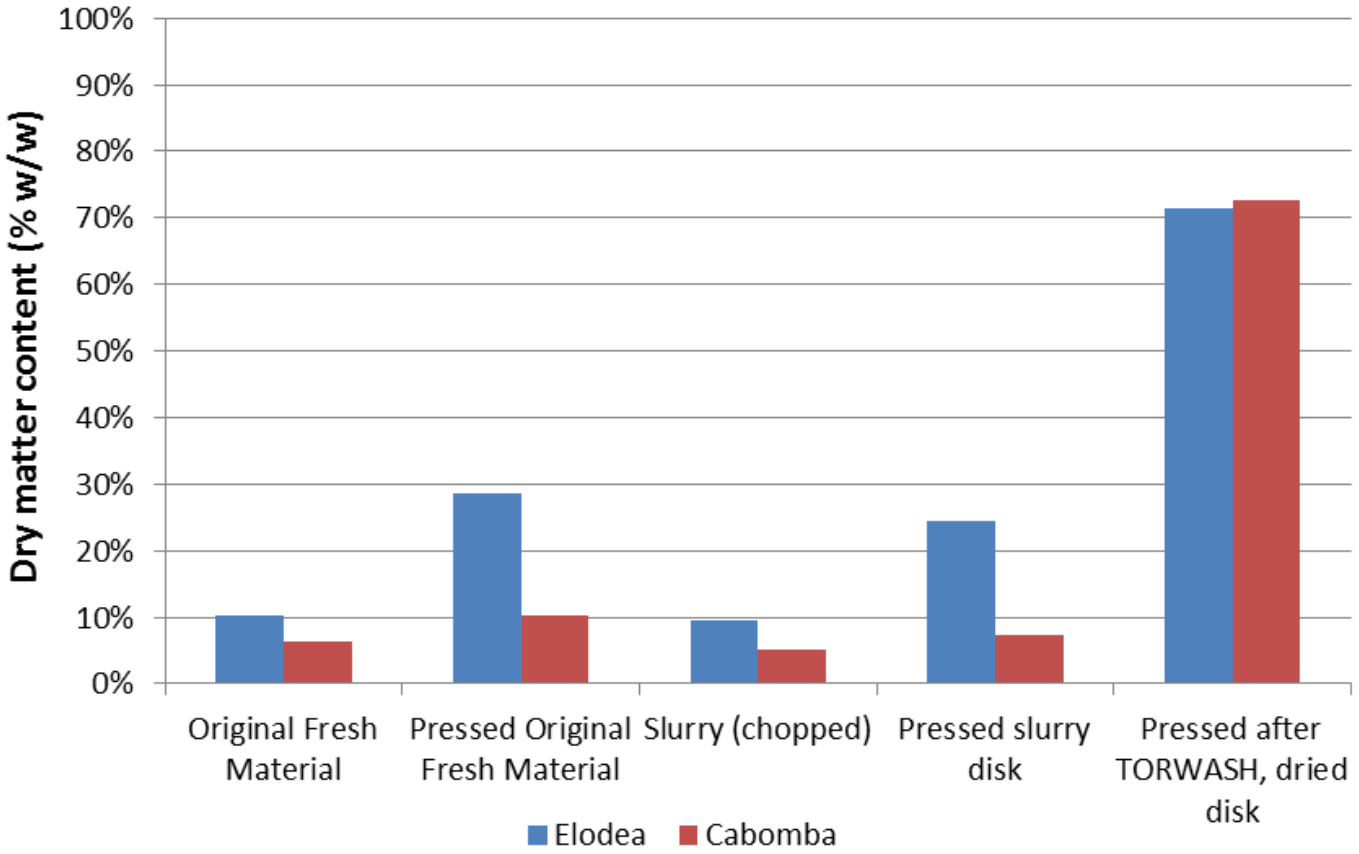
TORWASH Example: Arundo Donax (3)

Parameter	Unit	EN plus A1	Wood pellets	Reed raw	Reed torwashed
Additives	wt% ar				
Water	wt% ar				
Bulk density	kg/m^3	≥ 600	636	-	ND
NCV	GJ/ton ar	≥ 16.5	18.6	17.9	20.6
ash	wt% DM	≤ 0.7%	0.3%	2.3%	0.6%
Cl	wt% DM	≤ 0.020%	0.012%	0.227%	0.005%
K	mg/kg DM		380	4924	116

- TORWASHed Giant Reed pellets comply with most stringent white wood pellets standard
- Completion of pilot installation foreseen 2016

Mechanical dewatering

- Example: *Elodea nuttallii* (water weed) and *Cabomba caroliniana* (fanwort)



Conclusions

- Torrefaction technology is ready for commercial market introduction and the basic drivers for torrefaction still hold
- But several factors slowed down this introduction, including:
  - European utility sector is facing difficult times – co-firing perhaps not the best launching end-user market (also in view of scale) – smaller-scale industrial or district heat perhaps a better option?
  - It takes time and effort to build end-user confidence
  - Instead of yielding immediately *the* ideal feedstock, torrefied biomass pellets development had to follow a learning curve, in parallel with white wood pellets
  - Biomass in general is under debate and opinions on biomass use are subject to change
- Near-future torrefaction R&D should focus on:
  - Product quality characterisation, optimisation and standardisation (addressing torrefaction *and* densification)
  - Broadening feedstock base (including lower-quality biomass: agroresidues, SRF, etc.)
  - Torrefaction as part of co-production schemes for bioenergy carriers and high added value products
  - Separation/recycling of inorganic components

Thank you for your attention

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