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## North Coast forests offer untapped bioenergy opportunity

New research suggests there are enough residues in the North Coast's sustainably managed forests and sawmills to power more than 200,000 local homes per year.

The news forms part of a recent report by the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI), which found more than one million tonnes of forestry residues from harvesting operations could be used for bioenergy, with no adverse environmental impacts.

DPI Research Scientist Fabiano Ximenes, who is presenting findings at tomorrow's *Bioenergy2017* conference in Sydney, said the two-and-a-half-year project analysed the production forests surrounding regional hubs Grafton, Kempsey and Bulahdelah.

"The research showed that there are also exciting opportunities in the production of biofuels and high-value chemicals, so there is significant untapped potential in NSW forests," he said.

"To uncover this information, our team weighed more than 700 tonnes of biomass residues, tested hundreds of samples for nutrient and moisture content, interviewed 33 wood-processing facilities and installed more than 40 motion-sensitive cameras to observe biodiversity."

According to the report, any potential impacts on the environment from the use of biomass can be effectively addressed by management actions; for example, via the retention of sufficient biomass in the forest to maintain biodiversity values.

"Use of the biomass for bioenergy has the potential to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emission reductions, due to the displacement of fossil fuels," Mr Ximenes said.

"There are also additional benefits of removing the residues that would otherwise decay or burn in the forest, such as a reduction in forest management operational costs, reduced fuel loads and supporting regional development by creation of a new industry."

Recent changes in state and federal legislation also now recognise bioenergy as a renewable energy source.

Mr Ximenes said NSW is well positioned to lead the nation in the adoption of bioenergy as a cost-effective and climate friendly energy solution.

"Biomass from forestry residues has great potential for large-scale electricity generation, industrial heat, biofuels and valuable natural chemicals, all within NSW regional communities," he said.

The research forms part of the *NSW Forestry Industry Roadmap* initiative, delivering on Pillars 3 and 4 of 'Community Understanding and Confidence' and 'Industry Innovation and New Markets'.

The NSW Government is also a proud sponsor of *Bioenergy2017* conference. For more information or a copy of the full report, *North Coast Residues*, visit [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/northcoastresidues](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/northcoastresidues)

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