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# connect

The Biomass Connect Newsletter

Issue 3  
August 2023

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### GET IN TOUCH

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## WELCOME

Welcome to the third edition of the Biomass Connect newsletter. There is so much going on in the Biomass World and reading this newsletter is the best way to stay Connected!

Read on to find out about Sustainable Farming Initiative (SFI) updates, the latest on all the hub site plantings, news of upcoming events, how willow is part of an ambitious tree planting scheme in Canada and a well-deserved award for our pioneering work!

### Biomass Strategy out "shortly"

Officials at DESNZ had indicated that the much anticipated Biomass Strategy would be released before the summer recess (end of July). So far nothing has been published and the only news is that it will come out "shortly". We will of course provide news and our summary interpretation when it is unveiled.

## British Renewable Energy Awards – We win!

We are delighted to report that Biomass Connect picked up the [Pioneer award at the annual British Renewable Energy Awards](#) in June. This award is bestowed on newly formed companies or organisations that have gone above and beyond in driving forward innovative renewable energy solutions. This is fantastic news! Not only does it recognise all our hard efforts and commitment to knowledge sharing and collaboration to support the biomass sector, but it also shines a bright light on the biomass industry as a major way of helping tackle the UK's Net Zero commitments. Go Team!




## FOCUS ON INNOVATION

Raw biomass feedstocks such as miscanthus straw and willow chips are difficult to store and handle. They are large and bulky which requires lots of storage space and makes transport inefficient and expensive. Furthermore, their low bulk density means they have low energy density and that necessitates bigger boilers that take up even more space.

White Horse Energy is heading up a Biomass Feedstocks Innovation Programme project that is aiming to overcome these barriers and revolutionise the biomass market. They are currently constructing a transportable pelletiser that will enable biomass crops and agricultural residues to be processed directly into high density, low moisture content pellets.

Moreover, this innovation could prove to be a major disruptor in the conventional supply chain and route to market. Currently most biomass crops are located close to their end use, but the mobile nature of the pelletising unit could take this opportunity to all parts of the UK and beyond. This is because it will permit the development of smaller, decentralised processing and aggregation hubs to be deployed wherever biomass is produced.

For more information and to sign up to the project newsletter:

[www.whitehorseenergy.co.uk/innovation](http://www.whitehorseenergy.co.uk/innovation)

## Project Collaborators



## WEBINARS

This autumn tune in to Season 2 of the Biomass Connect webinar series!

We will be dealing with some very interesting topics and hearing from key industry players and farmer practitioners. As always, the events will be chaired by Kevin Lindegaard of Crops for Energy.

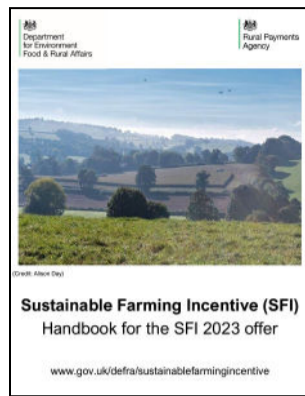
We are still finalising the timetable but please put a placeholder in your diary for the following dates:

<p><b>Webinar 1</b>  <b>16th Nov 2023 at 4pm</b></p> <p><b>Biomass Crops and Water Management</b>            Speakers: Chris Johnston (AFBI) ; TBD</p>	<p><b>Webinar 2</b>  <b>19th Dec 2023 at 4pm</b></p> <p><b>Title and speakers TBC</b></p> <p><b>Watch this space</b></p>
<p><b>Webinar 3</b>  <b>18th Jan 2024 at 4pm</b></p> <p><b>Maximising Biodiversity in your Biomass Crop Plantation</b>            Speakers: Rebecca Rowe (UKCEH) ; Farmer TBD</p>	<p><b>Webinar 4</b>  <b>15th Feb 2024 at 4pm</b></p> <p><b>Managing Fuel Storage and Drying to Best Practice Quality Standards</b>            Speakers: Will Richardson (RDI Associates) ; Farmer TBD</p>

And don't worry, if you missed Season 1, the four webinars are available on demand from the [Biomass Connect video library](#).

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Sustainable Farming Initiative (SFI) Update



There is some potentially good news for biomass crop growers. In the latest SFI release, biomass crops are classified in the category of non-horticultural permanent crops, which includes 'lands utilized for Miscanthus, Reed Canary Grass, nursery crops, and Short Rotation Coppice.'

This categorization presents an opportunity to apply for payments that include:

- £673/ha payment for establishing flower-rich grass margins or in-field strips (IPM2)
- £45/ha payment for farmers not using insecticides on permanent and arable crops (IPM4)
- £5.80/ha payment for actions promoting soil health, with an additional £95 per agreement (SAM1)

DEFRA will be accepting applications from August 2023 with payments issued every three months. Find out more [here](#).

### International News: 2 Billion Trees



The Canadian Government has an ambitious plan to plant 2 billion trees by 2030.

The [2 Billion Trees \(2BT\) Campaign](#) provides support to organizations to plant trees over 10 years. This is obviously a huge undertaking but unlike tree planting schemes in the four devolved regions of the UK, the Canadian scheme is harnessing the potential of short rotation tree crops. Short Rotation Coppice willow is one of the eligible tree types and large-scale plantings are being achieved by the company [Ramo](#). This business is probably the biggest willow company in the world with 65 employees and a willow nursery area covering 165 hectares.



### WBE Growers Survey

Do you have access to existing biomass? Are you interested in planting dedicated biomass crops under a contract? Then Western Bioenergy (WBE), the power station based in Port Talbot would like to hear from you.

They are canvassing potential suppliers to identify the extent of the current resource in Wales and Welsh/English border counties and the appetite of growers to be part of a future supply chain. Please complete their [short survey](#).

## BIOMASS CONNECT DEMO EVENTS



### Biomass Crops and Diversification

**Date: 11th August 2023**

**Location: Cockle Park Farm, Northumberland**

This event will focus on an overview of the research into SRC willow, poplar, and other biomass crops at Newcastle University Cockle Park farm. There will be a guided crop tour to view various biomass crops and discussions on the agronomy, economics, and environmental impacts of different biomass crops and diversification options.

[Book a Place](#)



### Biomass Crops and Agroforestry

**Date: 14th September 2023**

**Location : North Wyke, Devon.**

This event will focus on research into effective agroforestry systems and will consider how biomass crop options can be utilised for dual-crop benefit. This will include a showcase of a range of biomass crops and how these can be used as a diversification option to improve farm business efficiency.

[Book a Place](#)



### Biomass Crops and Diversification

**Date: 21st September 2023**

**Location: Easton College, Norwich.**

This event will focus on willow biomass crops, with an overview of the research undertaken at Easton College with Rothamsted Research into varieties of willow for biomass production.

[Book a Place](#)



### Biomass Crops for Integrated Land Management

**Date: 28th September 2023**

**Location : AFBI Hillsborough, NI.**

This event will focus on research into approaches for effective utilisation of biomass crops, for reducing factors such as nutrient runoff and will explore their potential as an alternative energy source, which could be used on-farm to improve farm business efficiency.

[Book a Place](#)

### More Demo Events

If those aren't enough, we're currently working on more events for 2023 so keep an eye on your emails and the [Biomass Connect Events Calendar](#) for the latest details.

[Demo Events Calendar](#)

## MEET THE BIOMASS CONNECT TEAM

If you can't make a Biomass Connect demo event, then your next best option is to come and talk to us at one of the trade shows where we are exhibiting. You'll be able to find out all about the project, meet experts, discuss different crop options and get some FREE Biomass Connect merch! The next one on our agenda is:

- [The Agroforestry Show, Bishopstone nr Swindon – 6-7 September 2023](#)

There's also an opportunity to hear our project leader Dr Jeanette Whitaker speak about the project at the [REA's Wood Heat 2023 Conference on 24-25 October](#). This is the UK's leading wood heat industry event and includes other speakers involved in Biomass Feedstocks Innovation Programme funded projects.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



### The Agroforestry Show

**6-7th Sept. 2023**  
**Wiltshire**

Learn to see the wood for the trees through two days of:

- Inspiring workshops and talks
- Farmer and forester-led discussions
- Agroforestry farm walks
- Field demonstrations
- Exhibitions and market stalls



### Miscanthus Farm Walk

**27th Sept. 2023**  
**Norfolk**

Terravesta are organising a farm walk Miscanthus grower, Algy Garrod in Norfolk.

The morning will include some complimentary light refreshments, a short, informal presentation from Terravesta, a chance to ask questions and a tour of the Miscanthus crop



### Confor Woodland Show

**21st-22nd Sept. 2023**  
**Shepton Mallet**

Whether you work in the sector or are looking to find out more, there's something for everyone.

The Confor Woodland Show is a place for anyone interested in forestry and woodlands to hear about latest products and services, receive practical advice, network and enjoy the demos and seminars offered over the two days.

**Details of these events and more  
can be found on the**

**Biomass Connect Event Calendar**

If you have an event that should be on the calendar then please let us know.

## GROWERS' STORIES



### Valorisation of Miscanthus at Burlerrow Farm

This video was filmed at Burlerrow Farm and will be available in the [New Media](#) section of the Biomass Connect website.

James Mutton talks about how his farm business produces a range of different products from miscanthus. These include equine and animal bedding, fuel grade briquettes and pellets and a range of forage products. Mr Mutton has been growing miscanthus in Cornwall since 2002 and currently processes 4,000 tonnes a year from his own farm and from bales he purchases from 20 other growers.

Mr Mutton's miscanthus story is outlined in the first of our highly informative economics cases studies. This will be coming soon, you'll be able to download it and other Case Studies from the Biomass Connect Website.



### Planting Completed at Hub Sites

By way of illustrating the tremendous amount of work we have covered in a very short time.....we can proudly announce that the hub site plantings are complete! All 8 sites across the UK are now fully stocked with a wealth of biomass crops. In total, a quarter of a million plants have been established with about 50% planted by hand. This was a herculean effort by the team who have had to deal with very topsy turvy spring weather conditions as well as navigating through some very tricky customs red tape (associated with imports of Black Locust from Hungary and "exporting" Eucalyptus to Northern Ireland).

As these plots mature, visitors will be able to compare and contrast all the main crop types and management regimes whilst also seeing what grows well near them. This will be an amazing resource for farmers, project developers, academics, students and policy developers.

Find out about your local site [here](#).

## Centre for High Carbon Capture Cropping (CHCx3) - funding achieved for 4 year project

A new project led by NIAB has been awarded 4 years of DEFRA funding to investigate food, forage and perennial biomass crops with potential to enhance carbon capture & sequestration. The project is looking to:

- Optimise production of renewable biomaterials for fibre, textiles, and construction, and build value chains.
- Establish a UK Knowledge Hub.
- Quantify carbon removals, consistent with emerging standards for measurement, monitoring, reporting & verification.
- Develop carbon insetting/offsetting platforms, achieving revenue generation for farmers & supporting corporate sustainability.



### CENTRE FOR HIGH CARBON CAPTURE CROPPING

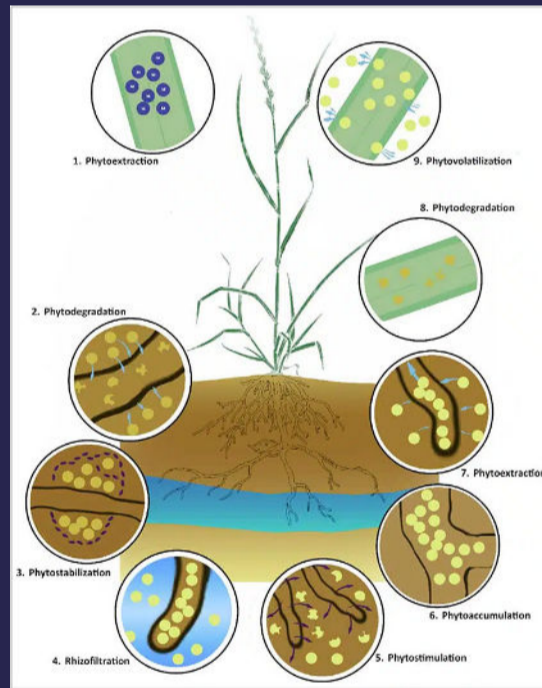
There are many synergies between CHCx3 and Biomass Connect and we are looking forward to exploring these.

For more information click this link <http://www.niab.com/research/agronomy-and-farming-systems/centre-high-carbon-capture-cropping>.

## TECHNICAL ARTICLES

A quick round-up of some the latest technical articles published on the **Biomass Connect** website.

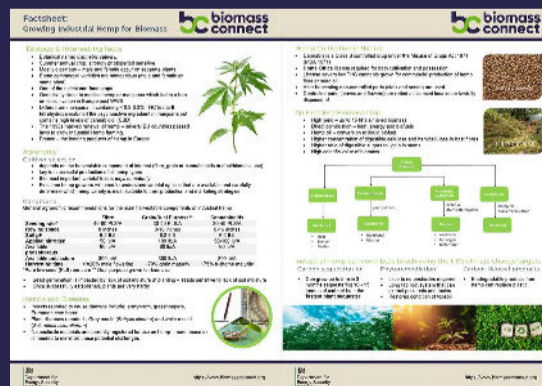
### Environmental and biodiversity impacts of Miscanthus plantations



Bioenergy crops are set to increase in the UK and the wider landscape. To develop a sustainable biomass market the impacts of biomass crops on environment and biodiversity must be considered. Any agricultural production is primarily based on human demand and there will always be a trade-off between nature and humans or one benefit and another. Miscanthus is a promising energy crop can provide a range of benefits while minimising environmental harm.

[Read Article](#)

### FACTSHEET: Growing Industrial Hemp for Biomass



Everything you need to know about growing hemp for industrial biomass: its biology, agronomy and its credentials as a biomass crop.

[Factsheet](#)

There is also a more in depth Technical Article focussing on Hemp as a biomass crop.

[Read Article](#)

[Read More Technical Articles](#)

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