Properties of woodchips from SRC

With reference to international quality standards, woodchips derived from SRC can be evaluated by the following parameters:

- Mean particle size distribution pursuant to EN ISO 17827-1
- Moisture content pursuant to EN ISO 18134-2
- Ash content pursuant to EN ISO 18122

Tests have shown that woodchips from SRCs differ from normal forest-based woodchips mainly by the ash content. Apart from that both have almost the same properties.

The SRCplus label

The SRCplus label is a marketing tool in order to promote the use of woodchips from locally produced SRC. In the bioenergy region Achental, the first woodchips from SRC will be traded by the Biomass Trade Center Achental in February 2016. The label does not certify the quality or the sustainability of the woodchips.

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www.srcplus.eu

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Woodchips from local Short Rotation Woody Crops (SRC)

What is SRC?

Short rotation crops (SRC) is a modern agricultural practice for the production of woodchips. Thereby, usually about 20 cm long cuttings are planted manually or by means of a machine on arable land. Depending on the climatic conditions, soil properties and water availability, the following species can be used: poplar, willow, alder, or robinia. These species have the ability to re-grow (called “coppice”) from the left rootstock after harvest.

How to produce SRC-woodchips

According to a rotation period either of 3-5, 6-10 or up to 20 years the trees can be harvested – mainly between December and March. The harvest during winter has the advantage that the trees are leafless, that the moisture content of the wood is quite low (compared to spring and summer) and that soil damages of heavy machinery can be minimized due to frost in the soil. The harvesting techniques can be differentiated into a motomanual (areas <1 ha), a semi- or a fully mechanical harvest. By applying the motomanual harvest, the trees are cut with a chainsaw, collected by means of a forwarder and transported or deposited at the edge of a field. There the trees can be processed by a wood chipper into woodchips. The fully mechanical harvest differs to the motomanual and the semi-mechanical harvest by combining the cutting and the chipping procedure in one operation. This can be performed either by self-propelled SRC-chippers (adapted maize / corn choppers) or with SRC-attachments mounted on tractors.

Benefits of SRC

One of the benefits of an SRC plantation is that the used tree species can regrow after the first and subsequent harvests. Consequently the SRC plantation can be managed for minimum 20 to 30 years. Thereby SRCs is an excellent alternative to annual energy crops and can be complementary to the existing agricultural system. Furthermore, SRC plantations do not need (mineral) fertilizer with leads to a saving of expenses compared to annual crops. In addition to the production of a solid biofuel SRC plantations have more positive characteristics. They can help to improve water quality, enhance biodiversity, provide other ecosystem services, mitigate climate change, as well as to improve, support, speed-up or strengthen local mass flows and local supply chains. Furthermore they can be a good alternative to woodchips from traditional forestry.

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