

BIOMASS

INFORMATION

Biomass is the organic material that has stored the sun's energy in the form of chemical energy through the process of photosynthesis. Biomass fuels include wood, wood waste, straw, manure, corn, and other by-products from a variety of agricultural processes.

When burned, the chemical energy in the biomass is released as heat. This heat can be used to heat homes and generate steam to produce electricity.

Biomass has been used in Michigan for hundreds of years to heat homes, provide light, and cook food. Biomass is also used by some electric power plants and by industry to produce steam for industrial processes.

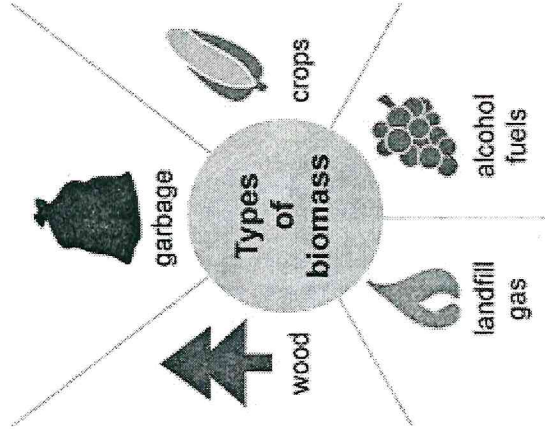


Photo Credit: US Energy Information Administration

ADVANTAGES/USES

- Can be used on a small or large scale with locally produced biomass materials.
- Sustainable energy source if managed properly.
- Contributes to the economy of the agricultural and forest regions.
- Can utilize some animal, food, and plant wastes, such as manure and used cooking oils.
- Can reduce landfill space.
- Can be used as a transportation fuel.

DISADVANTAGES/LIMITS

- Supply challenges exist, especially in urban areas where biomass resources other than garbage are scarce.
- Mixed sources, such as urban waste, require separation before burning to avoid releasing toxins.
- Wood-burning stoves could cause air pollution and respiratory problems.
- Reduces nutrients returned to the soil by composting.

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