

## Press release

Renewable Carbon Initiative (RCI)

[www.renewable-carbon-initiative.com](http://www.renewable-carbon-initiative.com)

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## Renewable Carbon Initiative (RCI) supports the European Green Deal, but calls for an extension to the material sector through a comprehensive renewable carbon strategy

The current political focus on renewable energy is not sufficient to achieve climate-neutrality by 2050. Fossil carbon use in materials needs to be addressed, too, as the carbon contained in the molecules of chemicals and materials is prone to end up in the atmosphere sooner or later. Only a full phase-out of additional fossil carbon by 2050 will achieve the planned reduction of overall greenhouse gas emissions and realise a carbon neutral economy.

The “Renewable Carbon Initiative (RCI)” supports the Green Deal and the new plan of the European Commission (1) to reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. This level of ambition for the next decade is supposed to put the EU on a pathway to reaching climate neutrality by 2050 and is supposed to be the foundation of the EU’s continued global leadership, ahead of the next UN climate conference (COP26).

The energy system will be at the heart of this effort, as the EC has repeatedly explained. The entire focus is on increasing energy efficiency and the share of renewable energy, and strengthening CO<sub>2</sub> standards for road vehicles. But this is not enough to reduce the overall greenhouse gas emissions and realise a carbon neutral economy.

It is of utmost importance that policy moves beyond renewable energy and decarbonisation strategies. Chemicals, plastics and other organic materials are inherently based on carbon, today mainly on fossil carbon. And they play a crucial role in our life today and in the future, with for example personal protection equipment like clothing, helmets or goggles as a very recent example. The fossil carbon use in materials needs to be addressed by climate strategies as well, as the carbon contained in the molecules of chemicals, plastics and materials is prone to end up in the atmosphere sooner or later.

As of today, 80% of global greenhouse gas emissions are a result of additional fossil carbon from the ground. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the chemical industry are predicted to account for up to 50% of all emissions from fossil fuels in 2050, but they are still not addressed explicitly by European policy. Even the new chemicals strategy of the EU, widely branded as the most stringent regulation on chemicals, is only focusing on health-damage effects of chemicals, and completely ignores fossil-based CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the damages of climate change. A missed opportunity for policymakers to address the invisible but vast carbon footprint of chemicals.

Only a full phase-out of this additional fossil carbon by 2050 will achieve the EU's targeted climate neutrality. Accordingly, the Renewable Carbon Initiative (RCI) calls for an extension of the European Green Deal to the material sector through a comprehensive renewable carbon strategy. The equivalent to decarbonisation in the energy sector is a transition to renewable carbon in the chemical and plastics industries. Therefore, the renewable carbon strategy complements the decarbonisation strategy. The ideal target is that by 2050, fossil carbon in sectors that inherently cannot be decarbonised will be completely substituted by renewable carbon, which is carbon from alternative sources: all kinds of biomass, direct CO<sub>2</sub> utilisation including recycled carbon emissions and recycling, mechanical as well as chemical. This fundamental change in the chemical industry is seen as the only way for chemicals, plastics and other organic materials to become sustainable, climate-friendly and part of the circular economy – part of the future in a carbon neutral economy.

There is growing market demand for products that do without fossil carbon and rely on renewable carbon instead. So far, there is no political support. Considering that the International Energy Agency predicted this summer that the chemical industry would consume 50% of the world's oil in 2050 as the energy sector becomes increasingly decarbonised, one can see the importance of the switch to renewable carbon for the chemical industry.

The members of the Renewable Carbon Initiative (RCI) encourage the development of a renewable carbon strategy to extend the European Green Deal to the materials sector and connect the dots to other relevant policies like the Circular Economy Action Plan. They are leading by example by making greater use of biomass, CO<sub>2</sub> and recycled carbon streams already today. All three alternative carbon sources together can form a circular renewable carbon economy that will be able to reshape the current petrochemical industry. This would not only drastically reduce GHG emissions, but also support six of the 17 United Nation Sustainability Goals.

The "Renewable Carbon Initiative (RCI)" was launched on 23 September 2020. Eleven leading companies (2) from six countries have founded the initiative under the leadership of nova-Institute (Germany). The aim of the initiative is to support and speed up the transition from fossil carbon to renewable carbon for all organic chemicals and materials. More than 150 well-known experts support the initiative personally.

- (1) Press release 17 September 2020, Brussels: „State of the Union: Commission raises climate ambition and proposes 55% cut in emissions by 2030” ([https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_1599](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1599), last access: 2020-09-30)
- (2) <https://renewable-carbon-initiative.com/core-advisory-board/>



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