

Response from Biofuelwatch to Yeo Valley regarding Haven Power

Dear Ms Laurie,

I am writing on behalf of the environmental organisation, [Biofuelwatch](#).

We previously emailed Yeo Valley on the 17th and 28th October 2019 in order to share our concerns about the climate and environmental impact of your energy supplier, Haven Power, which is owned by Drax Plc, and to urge you to consider switching to a genuinely green energy provider.

As we did not receive a response from Yeo Valley, we set up a [petition](#) on our website and have been encouraging our supporters to try to share their concerns with you via Twitter. We have been made aware of two letters from Yeo Valley which were received by our supporters. I have included a copy of Yeo Valley's letter below.

We would like to respond to the points raised in your replies and send further information about why we are asking Yeo Valley to reconsider your choice of energy supplier.

Firstly, your letter claims that Drax power station is just one of several sources of Haven Power's electricity. In reality, Haven Power is fully-owned Drax Plc subsidiary. It was set up with the sole aim of selling so-called "renewable electricity" generated by Drax to businesses, as you can see from [Drax's Annual Report](#).

Haven Power's website states that almost all the electricity sold comes from burning wood biomass - by Drax. Haven Power's website also lists three of its customers on its home page, one of them being Yeo Valley. It is therefore clear that Yeo Valley's contract with Haven Power is being used to portray Drax's biomass electricity as 'sustainable' and thus, we believe, to greenwash the image of the [UK's single biggest source of CO2 emissions](#).

Secondly, your response refers to Drax Plc meeting the requirements of the Renewable Obligation Order in relation to feedstock sourcing. However, this simply means that Drax Plc is complying with the legal regulations related to renewable electricity subsidies. We are not alleging that Drax is in breach of UK law but we are extremely concerned about Drax's claim which you cite that its biomass is "sustainably and responsibly sourced from managed forests."

We believe that as a company which is concerned about organic farming, wildlife and conservation, it is vital for Yeo Valley to look at all of the evidence - in this case including the very detailed evidence collated by environmental NGOs in the USA, investigative reporters, and, in relation to the climate impacts of this type of biomass energy, scientific studies and reports.

Research by American environmental organisations and [Channel 4 Dispatches](#) has revealed that Drax is not only burning waste wood or trees from managed plantations. Conservation organisations, including [NRDC](#), [The Southern](#)

[Environmental Law Center](#) and [The Dogwood Alliance](#), have conducted extensive research into the wood which is sent from the Southern USA to burn as wood pellets in Drax and much of this wood comes from the [clear-felling of biodiverse wetland forests](#) in states such as North and South Carolina and Georgia.

Drax's main wood pellet supplier, Enviva, also states in its own [Track and Trace](#) report that almost half of the wood being felled is hardwood. This hardwood is only found in [natural forest ecosystems](#) in the region.

These forests have been designated as a [Global Biodiversity hotspot](#) and are home to many rare and [endangered species](#), including black bears, warblers, red wolves, salamanders and frogs.

A recent report by [NRDC, The Dogwood Alliance and the Southern Environmental Law Center](#) has photographic evidence of the mass logging of mature hardwood forests by Enviva which is the world's biggest wood pellet producer and Drax's main supplier. Their investigations have been backed up by media investigations by reporters from [The Washington Post](#), [Climate Central](#), [Channel 4](#) and [TV2 in Denmark](#).

This clear-felling and burning of biodiverse forests is devastating wildlife, [polluting local communities](#) and [making the climate crisis worse](#). It is also destroying the forests which we need as [carbon sinks](#) to help us reduce our emissions and meet the Paris Agreement goal of keeping global warming to 1.5 degrees. As 145 NGOs from around the world have stated: "[Protecting and restoring the world's forests is a climate change solution, burning them is not.](#)"

The climate impact of burning trees for electricity was highlighted by the [European Academies of Science](#) and in a letter from [800 scientists to the EU Parliament in 2018](#): "Even if forests are allowed to regrow, using wood deliberately harvested for burning will increase carbon in the atmosphere and warming for decades to centuries – as many studies have shown – even when wood replaces coal, oil or natural gas. The reasons are fundamental and occur regardless of whether forest management is "sustainable."

Even if trees are replanted, they are often [monoculture plantations](#) which support very few species and which are treated with pesticides. This [report by the Dogwood Alliance into the history of US forests](#) revealed that 33 million acres of natural forests in the Southern USA have been lost and replaced with 40 million acres of monoculture pine plantations.

Not only do these plantations harm the health of ecosystems, but a [recent investigation](#) into US pellet mills owned by Drax has also found that burning wood from plantations and 'sustainably managed forests' [increases carbon pollution in the atmosphere for at least 40 years](#): "To date, the impacts of wood pellets from Drax's mills have not been well understood. The results of the SIG analysis demonstrate that even under these most generous assumptions, Drax's biomass conversions are a false climate solution, increasing atmospheric carbon well beyond 2059."

Thirdly, we are very concerned about your reference to Drax's claim that "the sustainability criteria ensure that subsidy is not given to biomass generation where forests are being destroyed or where carbon stocks in the forest are being depleted."

Research by the American environmental organisations, [NRDC and The Dogwood Alliance](#), has found that the sustainability certification scheme, the Sustainable Biomass Program, is not an independent certification scheme and it is [self-regulated by the biomass companies](#). It does not require on-site visits to the forests to check which trees are being felled or include any assessment of the carbon emissions from burning wood. Moreover, the greenhouse gas methodology used by sustainability certification schemes was exposed as insufficient and flawed by The Department of Energy and Climate Change's own commissioned report by [David MacKay and Anna Stephens](#) in 2014.

The award-winning documentary, [Burned: are trees the new coal?](#) shows the biodiverse US forests which are being clear-felled to burn in power stations like Drax and the communities and conservation groups who are trying to save the forests. We would be happy to send you a free link to watch the film online and this [factsheet has more information about Haven Power](#) and its links to deforestation, pollution and climate change.

As a company, Yeo Valley has highlighted your commitment to safeguarding [soil health](#), [tackling climate change](#) and [protecting wildlife](#). We urge you to help save biodiverse forests around the world, support endangered species and take action on climate change by ending your support for Drax's biomass burning and by switching from Haven Power to a genuinely clean energy provider.

We would be very happy to answer any questions you might have about the information we have provided and to send any more information that would be useful.

We look forward to hearing from you.

With kindest regards,

biofuelwatch@gmail.com

[Email from Yeo Valley to Biofuelwatch supporters regarding the petition asking Yeo Valley to switch energy supplier from Haven Power to a renewable energy company](#)

Many thanks for your email about our energy supplier.

Here at Yeo Valley we are committed to farm and produce our products in the most sustainable way, that is why we produce electricity ourselves thanks to the solar panels installed on our farm.

Unfortunately, we are not entirely self-sufficient and therefore we need to buy additional energy from time to time. We buy our energy from a selection of

renewable energy providers, Haven Power is one of our suppliers. There are a number of sources providing Haven Power with energy, Drax power station being one.

Drax's biomass is sustainably and responsibly sourced from managed forests. They committed to the [Renewables Obligation 2015](#) laying out specific requirements on sustainable forest management which they must comply with, in order to receive subsidy on the biomass they use. These requirements include ensuring that biodiversity is maintained, health and vitality of ecosystems is maintained, and that the productivity of the area is maintained. The sustainability criteria ensure that subsidy is not given to biomass generation where forests are being destroyed or where carbon stocks in the forest are being depleted.

The above information reassured us that Drax operates within the set parameters for a sustainable source of energy. I trust this will clarify your concerns.

Kind regards,

Yeo Valley Family Farm