

Wood, the primary source of energy in Cameroon

Wood energy and its by-products, especially charcoal, are used by 84% of Cameroonian households to meet their cooking energy needs. According to the report on the energy situation in Cameroon in 2015, the consumption of wood energy amounts to 6,560,000 tons per year, including 356,500 tons of charcoal, mainly consumed in urban areas. Charcoal and wood sold in urban markets come from generally uncontrolled sources, especially from trees cut from new fields and natural forest areas in peri-urban zones.

Contrary to the old practice of collecting dead wood, live trees are cut down and left in the field until they dry. While fuel-wood is used by almost all households in rural areas, and by a large proportion of them in urban areas, its availability varies from one agro-ecological zone to another. In the Far North region, 95% of households use wood for cooking (MINFOF, 2017) due to lack of access to other energy sources that are too expensive or not easily accessible (gas or electricity).

It is therefore essential to support the progressive development of wood-energy value chains throughout the country in order to exploit the sector's economic potential but also to ensure its sustainable management.

Wood energy in figures

150
billiards
FCFA

Gross profit
generated by
wood-energy
value chains

90 000
direct jobs

84% of households use
wood energy

1,31% contribution to
non-oil GDP

6 560 000 tons
annual consumption of wood energy

Energy recovery from sawmill waste: an opportunity to meet the energy needs of households cooking

In 2012, Cameroon had 199 wood processing units (WPU). In addition, the data available for the year 2014 show a volume of 655,000 m³ of sawn timber declared for 79 WPUs with a material yield of about 35%, i.e. about 1.22 million m³ of sawing scraps, 50% of which could be used for charcoal production, i.e. 610,000 m³ of sawmill scraps. The development of this potential through carbonization therefore constitutes a major economic and social opportunity for Cameroon.

Perspectives and challenges

- The assurance of the legality of the supply sources.
- The intensification of reforestation, through the National Forest Plantation Development Program (PNDPF).
- The extension of the sustainable management approach to all wood energy supply catchment areas in the North and Far North Regions. The aim is to implement inventory and management guidelines for dry savanna areas, and to provide each basin with a simple management plan.
- The further organization of the value chain, with a view to making it a source of growth and employment (production, transport and marketing).
- The Promotion and use of improved households by a majority of households and SMEs.
- The development of synergies and complementarity between stakeholders.
- The Consideration of sawmill waste as a basic necessity in order to facilitate its production, marketing and circulation, reduce the tax burden and subsidize that from legal sources.

The value of promoting wood energy

- A renewable energy source
- A solution to reduce the CO2 emissions responsible of climate change
- An opportunity for job creation to the benefit of local populations
- A lever for growth and economic development
- A low-cost way for households to access cooking energy

Recommendations

- Setup an institutional framework bringing together all the stakeholders involved in wood energy management in order to develop operational synergy among them.
- Establishing monitoring systems for forest plantations.
- Recognize the economic importance of wood energy and integrate it into the strategy of the forest-wildlife sub-sector.
- Decentralizing the authorizations for access to wood energy resources at the regional or even departmental level and simplifying the applicable procedures.
- Developing and implementing strategies for the supply of wood energy to the Far North and Northern regions and monitoring their implementation in the development of major urban centers.
- Set up a system for controlling and monitoring the supply of wood-fuel to the major urban centers.
- Reinforce border surveillance in order to limit external pressure on the resource, particularly in the northern region.
- Implement binding regulations for the cutting and marketing of wood energy in the informal sector.

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Valorization of the wood energy sector in Cameroon

PARLIAMENTARIANS' NETWORK FOR THE
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