

Managing Biomass Trade in Tanzania to Tackle Deforestation

In Tanzania, unsustainable and inefficient biomass production has led to deforestation and soil degradation, thereby putting livelihoods at risk. The Government through the Ministry of Tourism and Natural Resources, Regional Secretariat, and District Councils should support measures geared towards sustainable charcoal production.

Biomass, mainly fuel wood and charcoal, accounts for about 90% of the total national energy consumption in Tanzania (Ishengoma 2013). This is mainly because charcoal is cheap and easily accessible for the majority of the people who have low purchasing power. It is also simple to produce, transport and use, and is characterised by low input and consumer costs.

Yet, the government has not been able to adequately enforce property rights, rules and regulations in most forested land. This weak governance, along with a lack of capacity to oversee business practices in the sector, has led the charcoal industry to become the second main cause of deforestation in the country behind shifting land use to agriculture. According to the World Bank charcoal production has been responsible for the annual loss of between 100,000 and 125,000 hectares of forest in Tanzania. (World Bank, 2009)



A charcoal trader. © Klas Sander

For many years, communities and traders in the charcoal industry have been active participants of tree planting campaigns and programmes organized mainly by the government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), but also a few Non State Actors (NSAs) as well as Development Partners (DPs). Involvement of these key players has intended to influence and enable them acknowledge the need and important role forests play to their livelihoods. However, such campaigns are sporadic, often with limited budget, and many times initiated to commemorate national days. This has prevented them from effectively slowing the pace of deforestation in the country.

A number of other measures are ongoing aiming at protection of the forest resources. For example, the National Bio energy Strategy is being finalized which also addresses issues related to charcoal business and fuel wood; formalization of the whole charcoal value chain where at production level

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- » Areas supplying the largest charcoal and firewood market of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania are Morogoro, Coast, Mtwara, Lindi, Njombe, Tabora and Tanga regions
- » Dar-es-Salaam uses more than 60% of total charcoal produced in the mainland
- » Some 28,000 bags (each weighing from 60-80kg) are delivered into Dar es salaam every day (Ishengoma 2013 in WB, 2009)
- » Furthermore, more than 80% of Dar es Salaam households use charcoal

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CUTS International, Geneva

37-39, Rue de Vermont
1202 Geneva, Switzerland
Ph: +41.22.734.6080 |
Fax: +41.22.734.3914
Email: geneva@cuts.org
Web: www.cuts-geneva.org

In collaboration with Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF), Tanzania



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for example the government plans to introduce the energy saving kiln, using Community Development Officers promotion of associations (societies) for training, awareness creation and access to loans, and establish charcoal selling points owned and operated in groups. The selling points will also be used to collect revenue from charcoal. Under this programme all charcoal transporters will be registered and packaging will be standard (20 to 25 kg bags). Other programmes include promoting energy saving or improved stove, and production of charcoal briquettes (charcoal made from rice hulks).

There are also initiatives by the private sector such as production and promotion of Enviro-fit Stoves and Alternative Rural Technology Institute (ARTI). Enviro-fit Stoves This is an American technology which uses platinum and saves up to 50% of charcoal use.

In the near future, it is expected that the rapid growth of charcoal consumption will continue in the country. If nothing is done to make production more sustainable, forests in Tanzania will no longer be able to meet energy needs. To ensure that this key sector of Tanzania's economy becomes sustainable with a reduced impact on deforestation, there is a need for implementating a regulatory framework that would make the sector manageable, i.e. within the boundaries of the formal economy. The authorities such as the Ministry of Tourism and Natural Resources (MTNR), Regional Secretariats and the District Councils should therefore consider the following measures:

- 1 Since the sector is largely informal, wood is most of the time illegally and unsustainably harvested and marketed, with licenses and levies being ignored. This has led to uncontrolled exploitation of forests and loss of revenue for the government. There is therefore an urgent need to ensure that rules and regulations are enforced. Being the custodians of forest resources, Regional Secretariats, Local Government Authorities (LGAs), TFS and FNRs should undertake the responsibility to tackle the ongoing illegal practices in the charcoal industry.
- 2 Significant changes need to be introduced to regulate and reduce informality in the sector. Currently charcoal producers depend on the existing tree stock which is unsustainable, and the present trade environment is unfavorable thus encouraging traders to resort in illegal trade. The Government should encourage and promote associations of charcoal dealers, license them, and give them titles or property rights to own and operate sustainable forest estates for charcoal production for both local as well as external market.
- 3 It is high time to attract investors in sustainable charcoal production. The government needs to develop a mechanism where investors will be allowed to own land and invest in reforestation (tree planting) aimed at charcoal production for both local as well as external market.

Giving priority to investors who plant using rotational age would help ensure continuity and stable market supply.

- 4 In the meantime there is a need to sensitize and encourage urban charcoal and firewood users in all major consuming areas such as Dar-es-Salaam, Arusha, Mwanza, Mbeya and Dodoma to switch to alternative sources of energy, e.g. gas and electricity. This measure can successfully be implemented by for example subsidizing gas and electricity at least initially.
- 5 Scale up and replicate the ongoing energy saving technologies in Tanzania. The scaling up should include promotion of the alternative energy sources.
- 6 Formalize the charcoal business and trade to enable the National Accounts reflect the actual forest contribution in the GDP from the current 3.3% which is very much under-estimated.

The aforementioned proposed interventions are necessary to enable forests play their critical role in the maintenance of the hydrological balance and soil protection. They maintain rainfall patterns and prevent water runoff, thus ensuring appropriate hydrology which is necessary for sustainable water sheds. This is important not only for agricultural development in Tanzania, but also for fishing and marine transport. The forests are also important for recycling and fixing of carbon dioxide which is currently a topical agenda around the world. The direct and spillover benefits are far much higher than what is gauged by the National Accounts currently.

USEFUL RESOURCES



CUTS, 2013. "Climate, Food, Trade: Where is the Policy Nexus – Tanzania."

This research study, undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team of three Tanzanian experts, aims to fill the current knowledge gaps on the three-dimensional relationship between trade, climate change and food security, and to provide recommendations for more holistic policy responses to the challenge of climate-related hunger, including through trade. ► <http://bit.ly/Y04x7y>



CIFOR, 2012. "Forests, fuel wood and charcoal: What policy makers should know."

This factsheet highlights key research findings for policy makers on issues related to forests, fuel wood and charcoal. ► <http://bit.ly/1hYsYI6>



World Bank, 2009. "Environmental Crisis or Sustainable Development Opportunity? Transforming the charcoal sector in Tanzania."

This policy note puts forward and discusses a range of policy measures along the entire charcoal value chain in Tanzania. ► <http://bit.ly/1hYuCt9>