

Energy for heating – Lessons learnt from the RWEDP programme.

Conrado Heruela, FAO

This presentation was based on observations from the long running Regional Wood Energy Development Programme which was conducted in 16 Asian countries. Although the main theme of this conference has been directed towards the use of biomass for electricity production, the importance of wood and biomass for thermal applications should not be overlooked. The presenter also drew attention to the lack of adequate information on the availability of bio-fuels; they tend to be the invisible fuel. He also highlighted the problem of weak national capacities of forestry services and energy agencies for the management of wood fuel supply.

We are still faced with the problem of unsafe cooking facilities and indoor pollution arising from inadequate ventilation. He indicated some of the common misconceptions facing the use of wood energy:-

- Only used by rural household
- Wood use drops following urbanisation
- Wood fuel is a major cause of deforestation

Instead the situation is such that wood and other biomass energy is used by all sectors of society and in some form continues to be used heavily by urban populations. Biomass should be seen as a modern energy source.

There are gaps in fully understanding of the wood energy sector in terms of its role and the full statistics of its importance. In many countries the wood market operates in a semi-illegal state, there is a need to legitimise these markets and ensure that they operate in the most efficient manner. Mr Heruela indicated that guidelines are needed on aspects relating to wood fuel and its management in order to ensure that its importance is properly considered in regional planning. Such planning need to take account of the real demand, the opportunities for improving the use of a diminishing resource and to better promote new end uses. He further high-lighted the opportunities that will be arising from the CDM, assistance is going to be required for regional planners to take proper account of these opportunities and how the importance of wood fuel could change because of this new funding resource.