

Misconceptions About Wood Energy

Misconception

Fact

Wood is not very relevant as an energy source

In fact, wood supplies about 30% of total energy consumption in the RWEDP member-countries.

Woodfuels are phasing out

No. In all RWEDP countries the consumption of wood and other biomass fuels is still increasing in absolute terms, even when their share in national energy consumption is decreasing.

Woodfuel has little value

The total value of woodfuels amounts to some US\$30 billion per annum for the RWEDP countries together.

Only poor and rural households use woodfuel

Surveys have shown that in many towns and even in some metropolitan areas woodfuels are widely used by both low- and high-income groups.

Woodfuel is a traditional commodity only

Generally not. Modern applications use modern fuels, which largely complement traditional fuel use.

Woodfuels are being substituted by modern fuels

At present, modern technologies are increasingly being applied to woodfuel development. Many industrialised countries are deliberately increasing wood energy use, for environmental and socio-economic reasons.

Most fuelwood originates from forest lands

This conflicts with many survey results revealing that some 2/3 of all woodfuels originate from non-forest land.

Woodfuel use is responsible for destroying the natural forests

This assumption dates from the 1970s. Now, plenty of evidence is available to show that woodfuel use is not a major cause of deforestation.

Fuelwood is collected for free

Some is, but a lot is not!

Woodfuels are a gift from nature

Many people, particularly in Asia, treat fuelwood as a commodity which can be, and indeed partly is, produced and harvested like rice or wheat, though with a much longer gestation period.

Woodfuel production is a marginal sub-sector

Woodfuel businesses are the main source of income for about 10% of rural households, supplying about 40% of their cash earnings. Woodfuel use generates at least 20 times more local employment than energy from oil products (per unit of energy).

Wood energy cannot be planned because of lack of data

Indicative planning does not require a full set of data. This type of planning can support policy making.

Burning wood adds more CO₂ to the atmosphere than oil

Sustainable re-growth of woodfuel captures the CO₂ back from the atmosphere. The net effect on the global atmosphere is zero, unlike that of fossil fuels.

With respect to renewable forms of energy, R&D should focus on solar, wind and hydro energy

Wood energy is renewable. Of the various renewable sources of energy wood provides by far the largest share in the region!