



CHARCOAL BRIQUETTES: ALTERNATIVE SOURCE OF COOKING ENERGY IN UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

Uganda's forest cover has diminished from over 11 million hectares in 1890 to 4 million hectares in 2005. Over 90% of Uganda's population relies on firewood and charcoal as cooking fuel sources. Charcoal is popular because it is affordable, easy to manufacture and accessible. In order to alleviate the problem above, a pilot study was done to train 30 farmers in Kasese district in Uganda. In July 2011 the farmers were trained for five days on a simple low cost and reliable technology that involves recycling agricultural waste to manufacture charcoal briquettes. Briquettes are an affordable source of cooking energy instead of the traditional charcoal and firewood. In November 2011, an assessment was done using questionnaires and actual observation to determine the impact of the training and thus technology. Results were analyzed using SPSS package. About 97% of the respondents were engaged in the production of charcoal briquettes using raw materials like maize stalks, maize cobs, bean stalks and spear grass. The farmer group has formed cooperative agreements with other farmer groups in the area. These agreements provide for the sharing of raw materials used in the production of charcoal briquettes, charcoal briquette machine and identification of market opportunities. The group mainly sells their products locally; they plan to expand their market to Kampala. The group has also participated in various exhibition events such as the Annual National Science Week organized the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). This has helped promote the technology and also increase their market share. In conclusion it is possible to use charcoal briquettes as an alternative source for fuel energy in Uganda, although more training and public awareness needs to be done.

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