REGULATING CHARCOAL PRODUCTION IN OFF RESERVES AREAS IN GHANA

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1. Introduction/Background

Woodfuel is the predominant domestic fuel for 70 percent of urban households in Ghana. In Accra alone, about 70 percent of households use charcoal as their main fuel for cooking (Energy Commission, 2002). It is estimated that, about US$70 million is spent on wood fuels per year, the high level of consumption reflecting the fact that most Ghanaians cannot afford alternative fuel sources.
1. Introduction/Background Contn’d

About 67 per cent of the wood fuel supply is from non-forestland, mostly the transitional savannah zone. The total woodfuel consumption in 2000 was 18 to 20 million tons of solid wood equivalents, with annual charcoal consumption of 1.1 million tons (FAO, 2002). It is also estimated that 50 percent of the total wood consumption as fuel was used for charcoal production.
2. The Current Situation with Charcoal Production/Regulation - Off Reserve

Research findings have indicated that,

• The bulk of Woodfuel resources in Ghana are not mainly produced from gazetted Forest Reserves but mainly from Agricultural lands outside Forest Reserves, the ratio is 67:33 for off reserve and forest reserve respectively.

• The roles of MMDAs and institutional co-ordination for harvesting of woodfuel are not clearly defined.

• There are no records on woodfuel production statistics off reserve across the country.
2. The Current Situation with Charcoal Production/Regulation- Off Reserve

• Woodfuel harvesters are not organised into any recognised association.

• Woodfuel harvesting is a hazardous industry and harvesters are mostly untrained and therefore vulnerable.

The socio-cultural norms of woodfuel harvesting and social responsibility commitments of woodfuel harvesters are not formalised and therefore not strictly adhered to.
2. The Current Situation with Charcoal Production/Regulation - Off Reserve

- Woodfuel harvesting is characterized by widespread environmental abuses as depicted below by empirical evidence of charcoal burning at a public cemetery.
3. Mode of Operation of Charcoal Producers

• The operators indulge in Indiscriminate felling of economic timber species mostly outside forest reserve and occasionally resort to incursions in forest reserves.

• There is cause to believe that they operate in connivance with some chiefs because they do so comfortably in the endemic communities without any confrontation between them and the local traditional authorities who are the resource owners.

• The charcoal and firewood are transported in commercial quantities from the various communities to the commercial centers in Kumasi, Accra etc.
3. Mode of Operation of Charcoal Producers

Indiscriminate felling of trees for charcoal burning.
3. Mode of Operation of Charcoal Producers

A pole of wood ready to be covered for burning.

Charcoal burning by the traditional earth mound method.
4. Justification for Regulating Charcoal Production- Off Reserve

- Majority of operators in the vibrant industry go about their routine operations without any recourse to the Forestry Commission.

- The Forestry Commission is therefore not in a position to capture any records on production statistics for any policy/management decision.

- Their uncontrolled activities result in the destruction of the environment as well as economically utilizable trees hence depriving the state of potential revenues.

- Unhealthy competition between timber operators and charcoal producers for the fear of the former losing the resource to the latter.
4. Justification for Regulating Charcoal Production- Off Reserve

- Tress play an important role in stabilizing and sustaining the climate (this because while alive and growing, they absorb the greenhouse carbon dioxide in the process of photosynthesis)

- Their depletion through commercial harvesting for charcoal consumption therefore has adverse effects on climate as well as carbon emission (this is because it results in less carbon sequestration and hence reduces the potential of trees to help reduce global warming)

- The smoke emitted from the charcoal earth mounds contributes to the build up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and hence increase global warming.
5. Current National Policy Perspective

POLICY OBJECTIVE 1:
Managing and Enhancing the Ecological Integrity of Forest, Savannah, Wetlands and other Ecosystems.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION: Sustainably manage and develop commercial woodfuel supplies and other non-timber forest products on both on- and-off-reserve forest areas.
5. Current National Policy Perspective

POLICY STRATEGIES:

Harvesting and production of woodfuels and other non-timber forest products (NTFP) would be done within sustainable limits on both reserve and off-reserve production areas. This will be achieved through the following actions:

a. Enact the necessary legislation to support and ensure that forest, trees, wildlife and BTFPs on private and communal lands are managed according to the national forestry development objectives and resources owner’s priorities.

b. Develop Criteria and Indicators and a chain of custody to ensure that commercial production of woodfuels in all types of forests are sustainable
5. Current National Policy Perspective

POLICY STRATEGIES:

c. Promote the establishment of commercial and small holder woodfuel plantations both on and off forest reserves.

d. Develop a national regulatory framework for commercial exploitation of defined NTFPs at District levels.

e. Promote research and development programmes for commercially viable NTFPs.
6.1 Proposal for Regulating Charcoal Production- Off Reserve

**METHODOLOGY**

A three phased methodology is proposed as follows;
- Pilot phase
- Roll out phase
- Community Woodfuel resource development phase
6.1 Proposal for Regulating Charcoal Production- Off Reserve

PILOT PHASE

This shall involve;

• Purposive selection of charcoal endemic Districts in the transitional zone

• An Initial personal contact/ discussion between affected Forest Services Division District Managers and representatives of the collaborating institutions.

• Stakeholder meetings for consensus building on the strategy for the way forward.
6.1 Proposal for Regulating Charcoal Production- Off Reserve

IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT PHASE

This shall involve the implementation of a proposed strategy outlined below.

• All commercial operators shall be sensitised about the innovation and given a deadline of three (3) months to clear their stocks.

• All such operators shall be given the option to either regularize their activities within the stipulated deadline and remain in business or risk being apprehended if they persist without the requisite valid papers after the deadline has lapsed.

• All registered operators shall be trained in appropriate tree harvesting techniques and management of coppice shoots in order to sustain their raw material supply from the existing natural stands.
6.2 Proposed Mechanism for Business Regularization

- **Policy**: Woodfuel harvesting/ charcoal production in Ghana shall be permitted on a regularized basis to meet the reasonable energy demand for domestic and commercial purpose.

- **Objectives**: To control the indiscriminate exploitation/destruction of economic timber species both in and outside Forest Reserves and to generate revenue for Forestry Commission without compromising on the integrity of the environment.
6.2 Proposed Mechanism for Business Regularization

Guidelines for business regularization:

• Mainstream commercial wood fuel harvesting for charcoal production into the operations of Forestry Commission.

• No person/company shall engage in commercial charcoal production/wood fuel harvesting for sale unless he has acquired a permit to that effect.

• No person shall convey or transport any harvested woodfuel from Forest Reserve or outside Forest Reserve area unless he/she has acquired conveyance permit from the District Forest Manager or his accredited representative.
6.2 Proposed Mechanism for Business Regularization

Guidelines for business regularization:

• The volume of woodfuel harvested shall be determined by stacking it into (a) the size of a standard stere of 1m X 1m X 1m or multiples of 10 steres of 1m x5m X 2m to provide a scientific basis for pricing.

• Priority shall be given to forest fringe communities that require it for domestic consumption.

• DMs shall approve applications for domestic use within the fringe communities whilst RMs shall be the approving authority for all commercial applications.
6.2 Proposed Mechanism for Business Regularization

• Guidelines for business regularization:

• Any applicant caught for harvesting more than the approved number of trees /volume shall be barred from accessing further permits, and shall be penalized accordingly.

• The District Manager shall ensure that, Compensations for farm destruction resulting from harvesting outside Forest Reserve are paid promptly to genuinely aggrieved farmers.
6.3 Procedure for Accessing Permits from the Forestry Commission

1. The applicant shall apply in writing to the District Manager with the following details:

   a. The name, address and passport picture of the applicant.
   b. Number of trees/volume requested for harvesting.
   c. Business registration certificate from the local National Small Scale Business Industries (NSSBI).
   d. Letter of introduction / recommendation from the local charcoal producers association.
   e. Clearance certificate from the MMDA’s concerned.
   f. Non-refundable inspection fee of one hundred Ghana Cedis for commercial purposes and twenty Ghana for domestic use.
   g. Letter of consent from resource owners/ farmers for Off-Reserve areas.

• Applications for domestic purposes shall exclude steps c, d and e above
6.3 Procedure for Accessing Permits from the Forestry Commission

2. The District Manager shall check to ensure that all the relevant documentations are correct and forward same with his comments within two days to the Regional Manager.

3. The Regional Manager on receipt of the application with all the supporting documents from the District Manager shall carefully study the documentation and upon satisfaction that the applicant has met the requirements, shall approve the application or otherwise.

4. The RM’s decision on the matter shall be communicated in writing to the District Manager not more than one week upon receipt of the application.

5. The District Manager then forwards the decision from the RM to the applicant.
6.3 Procedure for Accessing Permits from the Forestry Commission

6. All applicants whose application receive approval are made to pay the appropriate (product/conveyance fees) to the Division.

7. The piloting exercise shall be conducted by the affected District Managers for twelve calendar months during which time all Regional and District Managers across the country will be sensitized for them to appreciate the essence of the innovation and their respective roles.

8. During the pilot phase and probably beyond, District Manager’s shall be expected to strictly compile and submit monthly records on charcoal/woodfuel production figures and revenue generated to the Director of Operations for monitoring purposes.
6.4 Rollout Phase

The rollout phase shall involve the extension of the regularization of charcoal production off reserve to all Districts in Ghana.
6.5 Community Woodlot Development Phase

In the long term the traditional authorities and the various communities shall be sensitized on the need to embark on the establishment of community woodlots to cultivate fast growing woodfuel species. This phase shall also involve capacity building of woodfuel harvesters in appropriate harvesting techniques and coppice management in the existing natural stands.

It is envisaged that in a matter of between 4 –5 years, the community woodlots would become potential sources of woodfuel to support the woodfuel/charcoal industry
6.5 Community Woodlot Development Phase

In so doing, both the industry and the livelihood of the operators would have been rendered sustainable and the stress on the naturally occurring woodfuel species would be reasonably minimized to enhance environmental stability. The revenue to be generated from the woodfuel resource allocation to prospective industry operators will constitute a reliable source of revenue for socio-economic development of the hitherto impoverished woodfuel endemic communities.
7. Anticipated Challenges of Implementing the Innovation

• Possible resistance to a maiden attempt to bring the situation under control.

• Inadequate technical staff strength of the Forest Services Division to contend favourably with the additional workload.

• Inadequate logistics for the Forest Services Division to be able to cope with additional operational challenges.

• The challenges that are most likely to be posed by expanded jurisdiction of operations staff of the Forest Services Division
8. Conclusion

As a common pool resource, the unregulated utilization of trees predominantly outside Forest Reserves for commercial woodfuel and charcoal production has the tremendous potential to render them prone to tragedy if the trend continues indefinitely.

The proposed intervention is therefore meant to avert the tragedy but it is most likely to meet an initial resistance since this a maiden attempt to bring the situation under control. It is however anticipated that, the Forestry Commission will spearhead the implementation of the innovation with the much needed institutional collaboration for the selected districts to help make the exercise a success.
9. Recommendation(s)

• An intensive sensitisation programme with all stakeholder institutions to engender public understanding and appreciation for the intended regularization exercise.

• Employment of additional technical staff by the Forest Services Division

• Provision of additional logistics to the operational staff of the Forest Services Division

• The Forest Services Division should explore the possibility of creating additional Forest Districts to cover some of the newly created Political Districts