

A Monthly from the East African Sustainability Watch Network founded by Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD) and SusWatch Kenya

INFORSE discusses relevance of Electric Cooking as Alternative Option to Biomass Use in East Africa



Pressure cooker (Photo: sescom.co.tz)

Electric Cooking (ecook) using efficient electric cooking appliances such as pressure cookers, is gaining ground as an approach to address the above challenges. In particular the promising complement of mini-grid electricity (electrical generation systems of less than 10MW that serve customers through local distribution networks) to the traditional central grid, can help countries meet electricity access targets faster and, in some cases, more cost-effectively. An Ecooking pressure cooker can cook food faster through various cooking operations such as frying, boiling, steaming and baking. Hence it saves time, cost saving and secures safety in operation.

It is in this regard that INFORSE East Africa through its Coordinators (TaTEDO, SusWatch Kenya and Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development) organized a virtual meeting attended by more than 30 participants from East Africa and beyond. Guided by the topic: ‘*Electric Cooking as a Clean Cooking Option for East Africa: A ‘Silver Bullet’ to Reduce Dependence on Solid Fuels and Associated Indoor Air Pollution or is it Just ‘Chasing the Wind’?*’, the webinar sought to cross-examine eCook as a viable clean cooking option for East Africa based on viewpoints from practitioners across the region and beyond.

Dr Jon Leary, MECS, Loughborough University- Overview of the Modern Energy Cooking Services MECS Programme in East Africa, while Mr. Estomih N. Sawe Tatedo, Centre for Sustainable Energy Service, shared the Tanzanian experience. Agnes Mwikali Kalyonge, Kisambara Ventures Ltd shared the Kenyan (behavioural change) experience in promoting the use of ecooking, while Gunnar B Olesen, INFORSE / INFORSE-Europe provided view points from a global perspective especially with regards to the importance of eCooking towards achieving the 100% Renewable Energy target.

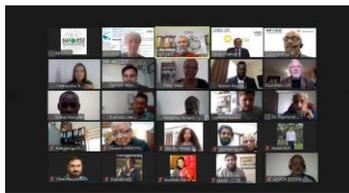
Dr. Leary noted that eCooking is starting to enter urban East African markets, adding that ‘Many East Africans now have access to electricity but don’t use it for cooking. For example, 0% Kenyans primarily cook with electricity, yet 73% are now connected’. He expressed optimism that emerging technologies & business models are likely to make eCooking accessible to many more people in East Africa. He concluded that eCooking is neither a ‘silver bullet’ for tackling biomass cooking in East Africa nor just ‘chasing the wind’. Mr Sawe (TaTEDO) highlighted Government efforts to promote clean cooking, barriers to scaling up clean cooking and policy recommendations for clean cooking in Tanzania especially for the smooth promotion of this innovation.

Agnes Mwikali noted that working in partnership with media (for example Citizen TV), Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC) combined with use of social media to encourage the Kenyan public to polish their culinary skills on their favorite dishes, using the eCooking innovation.

More information about the Ecooking webinar presentations and discussion from here:

<https://www.inforse.org/africa/EASE.htm>

UNFCCC Climate Dialogues 2020: CSOs Flag out Importance of Including Local Climate and Energy Solutions for Ambitious National Climate Plans



Due to the current health and safety measures put in place worldwide in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, COP26 and subsidiary body sessions have been postponed to 2021. In place of this, UNFCCC launched a series of virtual events, the UN Climate Change Dialogues, November 23 – December 4, 2020 (Climate Dialogues) to advance work on its subsidiary bodies and COP agendas.

Thus, the objective of the Climate Dialogues was to provide a platform for Parties and other stakeholders to showcase progress made in 2020 and exchange views and ideas across the subsidiary bodies and COP agendas mandated for 2020.

The International Network for Sustainable Energy (INFORSE) Network through its national and regional nodes in East Africa, South Asia and Europe, organized a virtual event on November 26, 2020. The Event highlighted local climate and energy solutions in East Africa with reference to the forthcoming *Local Sustainable Solutions – East Africa*; the Eco Village Development concept and experiences from South Asia; and the 100% Renewables in Kenya, Europe, UK, Ukraine and Belarus.

Kimbowo Richard (UCSD) noted that while Uganda has recently (November 18, 2020) launched the process of updating its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), which is also anchored in the overarching objectives of the country's National Climate Change Policy (NCCP), there are issues that include: scaling up public awareness and stakeholder engagement, alignment with existing and emerging national, regional and global policies (SDGs framework, sectors, local government development plans, among others); recognition of local actions as being key to respond to climate change, energy poverty, food security, water stress, declining land productivity, biodiversity loss, forest cover decline, etc.; building / strengthening synergies with all sectors and actors; putting in place adaptation and mitigation targets; and how to monitor progress and strengthen transparency in implementation of the NDC.

Mary Swai gave an overview of the forthcoming *Local Sustainable Solutions – East Africa* (catalogue) which is a collection of technologies being used by at least 1,000 people in the region in the water, energy, agriculture and food security, transport and other sectors. She added that these solutions ought to be promoted at the local level of climate action is to be community-driven.

Justus Munyoki and Nobert Nyandire (Suswatch Kenya) highlighted Kenya's NDC that has now taken up clean cooking as a key intervention. They noted that Kenya is yet to harness its vast renewable energy potential that can offset the heavy reliance on fossil fuels and biomass energy. 'SusWatch Kenya has made proposals to Government of Kenya to expand wind power and solar energy, improve efficiency of charcoal production and in cooking among other measures towards the 100% Renewable Energy target.

Gunnar Olesen (INFORSE Secretariat) noted that 'local solutions and popular public involvement are key to climate action, hence the virtual event is meant to inspire political leaders and decision makers to include CSOs and the public in planning through bottom up approaches'.

Read more about this INFORSE side event including the presentations made from here: <https://www.inforse.org/cd2020.php3>

SusWatch Kenya Report Appeals for More Appreciation of Biomass Energy in Kenya



Biomass (firewood & charcoal) widely use in East Africa. Photo: Engineering for change organization (Kenya)

The role of biomass energy in Kenya is not officially recognized. Biomass fuels are the predominant source of primary energy in Kenya with wood-fuel (firewood and charcoal) and agricultural residues accounting for about 68% of the total primary energy consumption.

About 55% of this is derived from farmlands in the form of woody biomass as well as crop residue and animal waste and the remaining 45% is derived from forests. Despite this heavy reliance on firewood and charcoal, the production of charcoal so far remains illegal while the consumption is legal. Even so charcoal trade, though ‘illegal’ is estimated to have a turnover of 32 billion Kenya Shillings annually.

Regarding the installation and utilization of biomass technologies, however, there are a few main challenges; High installation costs, lack of capacity, high technology failure rate, inadequate post installation support, poor management and maintenance, inadequate technology awareness and scarce promotional activities.

Since 2006 a biofuel technical committee comprising various bioenergy sector stakeholders has been meeting to deliberate on the biomass sub sector bottlenecks led by the Ministry of Energy. Nevertheless, little progress has been made and the ethanol, biodiesel and woody biomass policy documents that have been drafted are yet to be adopted and implemented by the Ministry.

In 2017 the consumption was 724 Peta Joules (PJ). The sustainable potential of solid biomass has been estimated to 15 million tons per year, equal to 243 PJ with an expected energy content of 4.5 kWh/ton. With current official plans for energy forest plantations of 4.1 million ha (41,000 km²), the potential will be increased.

A recent Report by SusWatch Kenya titled: ‘*Plan for 100% renewable energy scenario in Kenya by 2050, August 2020*’, conservatively estimate the increase to be at least 35 PJ, giving a total sustainable potential of 278 PJ. If the liquid biofuels and biogas is added, the total, sustainable potential is around 300 PJ, with a conservative estimate of the biogas potential.

SusWatch Kenya therefore recommends a need to recognize the importance of biomass energy use through the establishment of a private or government institution, whose role would be among other things to; facilitate the collection of data, issue policy guidelines on firewood, charcoal and modern biomass use, map the existing biomass resources, set the standards for ‘sustainable’ or ‘green charcoal’ or fuel wood, raise revenue from the taxation of sustainable charcoal burning to help promote further sustainable production and usage and also assess the energy potential and uses for biomass residues in Kenya.

Read the Full SusWatch Kenya Report: Plan for 100% renewable energy scenario in Kenya by 2050 (August 2020) from here: suswatchkenya.org/ease