

# 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 CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere than oil*

Sustainable re-growth of woodfuel captures the CO<sub>2</sub> 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!