



# ECOWAS REGIONAL BIOENERGY FORUM

Bamako, Mali

19 - 22 March 2012

Concept Note

The Forum contributes to the:



2012 INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF  
SUSTAINABLE ENERGY  
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## SUMMARY

The energy system of West Africa is challenged by the interrelated issues of energy access, energy security, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Principal among the energy challenges are the widespread and unsustainable utilization of limited wood resources for fuelwood and charcoal for cooking. In West Africa, almost 80% of the total energy consumption of the region comes from the traditional use of biomass. In addition, over 90% of the population uses wood and charcoal for domestic cooking. The region's over-dependence on natural forest resources is a driver of deforestation, desertification and increased GHG emissions. The unsustainable use of wood resources is damaging to public health and reduces the time available for women and children to pursue other economically beneficial activities, such as education and entrepreneurship. In addition, fossil fuel imports, on which most of the countries in the region depend, have proven to be a drain on governments' budgets in light of the sustained high price of oil since 2008. This has focused attention on the ECOWAS region as a potential source of biomass for fulfilling regional and global demand for biofuels.

The production and use of bioenergy is growing in many parts of the world as countries seek to diversify their energy sources in a manner that helps promote economic development, energy security and environmental quality. Modern bioenergy can provide multiple benefits, including promoting rural economic development, increasing household income, mitigating climate change, and providing access to modern energy services. On the other hand, bioenergy can also be associated with risks, such as biodiversity loss, deforestation, additional pressure on water resources, and increased demand for agricultural inputs, land, and commodities. The evaluation of the benefits and challenges of bioenergy production and use should reflect the national context. ECOWAS/ECREEE and the Global Bioenergy Partnership are collaborating to promote the transition away from the inefficient and unsustainable use of traditional biomass and towards the sustainable production and use of renewable biomass for cooking and other energy needs in West Africa.

## PROMOTING REGIONAL POLICY PLANNING

ECREEE is developing a Regional Bioenergy Strategy, as part of the agency's overall goal of promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency (RE&EE) within the ECOWAS Region. In order to facilitate policy planning within the region, ECREEE is collaborating with Partners and Observers from the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP) to hold a Regional Forum on Bioenergy Strategy from 19 – 23 March 2012 in Bamako, Mali. Participating GBEP Partners include Brazil, Ghana, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United States, UNDP, UNEP, UN FAO, and the UN Foundation. Because bioenergy production and use impacts agriculture, energy, forestry, the environment and regional economic development, ECREEE and GBEP are undertaking a multi-sectoral approach and seeks the active participation of all major stakeholders from the region's Ministries of Energy, Agriculture, and the Environment. The goal of the meeting is to initiate the international dialogue and peer-to-peer learning to support ECOWAS Member States developing their respective regional and national bioenergy strategies



to help meet the energy needs of their people and to create a vibrant and sustainable modern bioenergy sector that promotes economic growth and rural development.

## **FORUM PROGRAMME**

The Regional Forum will provide information and promote discussion on the following topics:

- 1) Economic, Environmental and Social benefits and challenges of bioenergy;
- 2) Means to simultaneously promote food and energy security through Integrated Food-Energy Systems and Agro-forestry;
- 3) Means to alleviate the negative health and environmental effects from using traditional fuelwood for cooking by transitioning to modern bioenergy and fostering improved forest management; and
- 4) Policy Tools from UNEP, UN FAO and the Global Bioenergy Partnership that can promote the creation of a sustainable bioenergy sector that is a driver of economic growth and improves environmental and social conditions.

In order to develop a framework conducive to broaden and accelerate the development and deployment of sustainable modern bioenergy, it is important to engage and build consensus among the various segments of society within the countries in the ECOWAS region, namely policy makers, officials, private sector individuals, civil society representatives, and the general public.

Dialogue on these issues will be encouraged by:

- 1) Sharing examples of African bioenergy success stories;
- 2) Providing examples of the challenges to the sustainable production of bioenergy and how these challenges were overcome; and
- 3) Discussing the integration of bioenergy into national energy strategies.

This first meeting will set the stage for subsequent technical meetings that will continue the discussion on a number of key issues, including, but not limited to

- 1) Natural resource assessments and mapping for sustainable bioenergy production;
- 2) Natural resource management and best practices in forest management;
- 3) Biomass to bioenergy conversion processes relevant to West Africa, including clean cookstove technology; and
- 4) Integrated Food-Energy Systems and Agro-forestry.

In addition, we anticipate that the meeting in March will generate additional topics for discussion in future meetings that are also of particular interest to the ECOWAS region.

Bioenergy projects have been developed and implemented in most of the countries, with different funding and business models. The overall goal of this series of meetings is to empower ECOWAS member states to develop their own national policies and strategies for using bioenergy to address their energy needs. It should be noted that some of the Member States, including Ghana, Mali, Senegal, and Sierra Leone, are at various stages of this process. In 2009, Mali established its National Biofuels Development Agency (ANADEB). Recently, Sierra Leone has begun a close collaboration with the UN FAO Bioenergy and Food Security Project and has established governmental working groups that are developing national policies and



goals and performing resource assessments. Ghana is an active Partner of GBEP and has developed a National Bioenergy Policy. Senegal is working with Brazil, the United States, and UNEP to assess the country’s bioenergy potential as well as to promote the sustainable production and use of bioenergy. Sharing lessons learned from developing and implementing national policies and plans will be of tremendous value in encouraging countries to develop their own national bioenergy strategies and policies to capitalize on the foreign direct investment interest and national and regional market forces.

<b>Contacts</b>	
<p>ECOWAS Regional Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE)                      Achada Santo Antonio,                      Electra Building, 2nd Floor                      C.P. 288 Praia – Cape Verde                      Tel. +238 2604630</p>	<p>Global Bioenergy Partnership Secretariat                      Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations                      Viale delle Terme di Caracalla                      00153 Rome - ITALY                      Tel.: +39.06.57052834                      Email: GBEP-Secretariat@fao.org</p>
<p>during the event +233 54 99 12 449 (English) or +22375610879 (French)                      Email: bioenergy@ecreee.org</p>	

