



PRESS RELEASE

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FAO - PISCES Case Studies highlight livelihoods benefits of small scale bioenergy initiatives in developing countries

March 2009: A report documenting the poverty impacts from biofuel and other bioenergy projects through fifteen case studies from Africa, Asia, and Latin America has been published by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and PISCES, a UK government supported energy and development research programme. The case studies were undertaken to assess the impacts that different types of local-level bioenergy initiatives can have on rural livelihoods. The research shows that local, small-scale bioenergy initiatives can bring real and sustainable benefits to poor communities in developing countries.

Today, at least 1.6 billion people in the world have no access to electricity, and over 2 billion still rely on traditional biomass for their everyday cooking and heating needs. It is increasingly recognised that improved access to energy services is essential if the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are to be achieved.

The present study was developed jointly between PISCES and FAO to address the common goal of improving the understanding of small-scale bioenergy initiatives and their impacts on rural livelihoods.

The study is based on a Market Systems approach, which focuses on the identification and illustration of the main Market Actors, the crucial Supporting Services and the Enabling Environment that contribute to the success or failure of initiatives.

The 15 cases, drawn from Asia, Latin America and Africa, were selected to highlight the use of a range of Bioenergy resources including natural **Bioresources** (plants which are naturally grown as opposed to cultivated crops); **Bioresidues** from existing forestry, agricultural or industrial activities; and purpose grown energy crops, better known as **Biofuels**. In order to investigate the full scope of bioenergy applications, the matching of these resources to a range of energy needs (cooking, mobility and electricity for lighting and communication etc) was specified.

Using examples from around the developing world, the study illustrates how small-scale bioenergy initiatives can and do provide improved energy access and power rural development through the creation of new opportunities.

The study confirms that a much greater efficiency in natural resource use is possible; but long-term planning and regulation play a crucial role, and broad stakeholder collaboration in the market chain is key to successful start-up. Local and productive energy end-uses can develop virtuous circles of livelihood benefits, but it is also beneficial to incorporate options for flexibility and diversification to reduce producer risk. To ensure vulnerable people are not disadvantaged by the potential negative impacts, social safeguards need to be in place.

The study may be downloaded from the PISCES website: www.pisc.es.or.ke

PISCES (Policy Innovation Systems for Clean Energy Security), a five year Research Programme Consortium funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) is co-ordinated by the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), based in Kenya. Other partners are: the University of Edinburgh (UoE), UK; the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, India; Practical Action, UK, East Africa and South Asia; and the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Tanzania.

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