

BRIEFING NOTE

Release of a Policy Brief on Biomass and a Strategic Framework on Bioenergy Data Management in Africa

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing note is to share a Policy Brief titled: **Will Biomass Always Fuel Africa?** and a **Strategic Framework for Bioenergy Data Management (AFBIDM) in Africa** published by the African Energy Commission in March 2022.

The policy brief provides a detailed analysis to policy makers, on how Biomass is used in Africa while the Strategic framework for Bioenergy Data Management is a blueprint outlining guiding principles on how AFREC, together with members states can improve bioenergy data reporting in Africa. The framework has been developed in response to bioenergy data management and reporting challenges facing the continent. Hence, it positions AFREC as the leading institution to resolve bioenergy data reporting, to develop mechanism which will enable member states and development institutions to accurately estimate, sustainable develop and consume biomass resources in Africa.

Background

Bioenergy is an important and useful energy source in Africa, representing about 50% of the total primary energy supply in Africa. It is primarily used for household cooking as firewood or charcoal as well as for productive end-use in small businesses. AFREC's broad objective as entrusted by the member states is to lead the development of energy policies and programmes, create and continuously update the African Energy Statistics, mobilise technical and financial support for Member States and implement capacity building programmes.

In contrast, bioenergy is therefore among AFREC's key thematic programmes approved by the African Union Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Transport, Transcontinental and Inter-regional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism (STC-TTIET) held in Cairo, Egypt in April 2019. The programme aims at improving monitoring,

reporting and the sustainability of the bioenergy resources in African countries in cognisant of the continent's higher bioenergy production and consumption.

Henceforth, together with member states, AFREC has undertaken various initiatives to strengthen its approach on bioenergy data management on the continent. One of the key integral activities is the collection, validation and processing of bioenergy data through the African energy Information System (AEIS), which is hosted and updated by AFREC annually, with support from member state's focal points. The system provides significant data and information on how bioenergy is performing as a fuel on the continent, therefore revealing details on bioenergy use and how the continent can sustainably develop the resources whilst limiting environmental and health impacts.

Against this background, through the use of bioenergy data on the AEIS, the policy brief provides critical elements for answering the critical question whether “***Biomass will continue to fuel Africa?***”, considering the importance of technical, financial, environmental, health, social and security dimensions of any major energy transition plan facilitating socio-economic development of bioenergy in Africa countries. The policy brief is developed using AFREC's data ranging between 2012 to 2019, hence, guiding policy makers to take evidence-based solutions, which will enable a smooth transition from an energy landscape currently dominated by biomass, to a less biomass-dependent energy mix, should the current level of biomass consumption not be sustainable.

Whilst the critical policy question, the ***Strategic Framework for the African Bioenergy Data Management (AFBIDM)*** addresses the critical element of bioenergy statistics and data, which are not only important for energy sector, but also are vital for many other economic sectors including households, industry, electricity, health, forestry, agriculture, taxes, security, etc. Bioenergy statistics in most African countries lacks quality and not comprehensive enough for sound decision making processes. The framework was developed as a result of extensive consultation with African Union member states, key development and financing partners in the African bioenergy sector, calling for bioenergy data reporting and management, thus providing key guidelines for improving bioenergy data coverage and quality at national level.

In Contrast, both documents share a comprehensive understanding of the past and present situation of the fuel on the ground, which remains one of the central elements for decision makers. However, the Framework further includes specific action plan and

activities which AFREC has planned to undertake to improve the reporting of Bioenergy statistics in all African countries in the coming five years, with a projected total cost of **USD 2.5 Million**.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Bioenergy will remain a key element of the energy profile of many African countries for years to come. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of bioenergy production and consumption should be considered at national, regional and continental energy transition plan in Africa. Having access to detailed statistics would not only allow measurements of the scope and scale of the use of traditional biofuels, but also where and how biofuels are produced, transformed, transported, sold, and used. Policy makers require all these data and much more (including the impacts of the uses, availability of resources in the future, etc.) for assessing the introduction and development of alternative fuels.

The **Policy Brief: Will Biomass Always Fuel Africa?** is available in [English](#) and [French](#) and the **Strategic Framework for the African Bioenergy Data Management (AFBIDM)** is available in [English](#) and [French](#).

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