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Title: Profits and constraints along the Ghanaian charcoal value chain

Charcoal production is a driver of deforestation in Ghana, yet this enterprise supports the service and agro-based industries, household nutrition and livelihoods of people involved its production-to-consumption. There is hardly any empirical analysis of the charcoal value chain to guide policy decisions for production, trade and marketing of the product. In this paper, we analyze the Ghanaian charcoal value chain with emphasis on actors, activities, costs and benefits as well as constraints to draw implications for sustainable resource governance and trade of the product. Data collected through questionnaire interviews with 350 primary actors, government officials and trade associations in 3 major charcoal producing districts was analyzed descriptively and quantitatively. Results indicate that charcoal is produced all year on subsistence and commercial scales from over 50 native species exploited from forests and farmlands. It is a major source of income involving 90% males. The earth mound is predominantly used in burning charcoal with cost-benefit ratio of 1.2. Three-four mounds of wood are burnt per commercial producer over 10-15 days yielding 3 - 7.5 tons of charcoal per mound depending on species and volume of wood. Seventy-five percent of charcoal produced is supplied to urban markets. Wholesalers earn the highest profit share of 37.3% compared with 29.9% by producers. Constraints include declining stocks of native hardwood species; drudgery and health hazards from smoke, burns and dust; inefficient transport systems; poor road network and poor quality product often producing high volumes of charcoal dust at wholesale and retail points. Official mediation in the domestic charcoal industry is limited to payment of conveyance fees and market tolls to District and Metropolitan Authorities and the Forestry Commission. Promotion of efficient charcoal production and packaging methods and conversion of waste charcoal dust on markets into higher value energy products such as briquette is recommended for health and environmental safety as well as profit maximization. Promotion of woodlots with species of highly productive biomass and energy characteristics will ensure sustainable supply of wood. Inter-sectoral and policy interventions for resource governance and regulation of production and trade of charcoal will ensure efficient use of wood resources. Hansen_Panel