

Energy Planning and Wood Balances

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Abstract

Woodfuel balances are commonly used by energy planners in developing countries to determine the adequacy of woodfuel resources. Recently, critics have argued that wood balances are misleading in their simplicity, exaggerating both the severity of the woodfuel shortage and the need for planned interventions to solve that problem. This paper examines four different wood balances developed for Tanzania. While the four studies all indicate that areas with miombo woodlands are in the greatest wood surplus, the specific estimates for any given region may differ widely. Despite their shortcomings, energy planners need woodfuel balances to give an impression of the adequacy of woodfuel resources. However, if energy planning is to have any effect, these balances must represent the beginning, and not the end result, of the planning process. Planners must follow the wood-energy balance analysis with work utilizing local people to solve local problems.

Key Word planning, balances