

BIOECONOMY RELATED POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS IN EASTERN AFRICA

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Introduction:

This paper reviews the existing policies and strategies that are relevant to the bioeconomy development in eastern Africa to identify their successes and failures with a view of positioning bioeconomy issues meant to aid sustainable development in the region. Bioeconomy is one of the strategies that can be used to spur economic growth and development and sustainable impacts in developing countries that have underutilized biomass to drive growth in other sectors such as manufacturing and industrialization. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, bioeconomy refers to the knowledge-based production and utilization of biological resources, processes and principles in providing goods and services within all sectors of the economy in a sustainable manner. Bioeconomy has significantly contributed to the development of agriculture, natural resource management, blue economy and manufacturing through application of technological innovations. Globally, many countries and governments have crafted strategies to promote sustainable bioeconomy growth and development. Africa being agriculture-based economy without an advanced manufacturing sector need to embrace bioeconomy policy development in order to fully utilize the potentials of the rich biological resources on the continent. The Eastern Africa region is endowed with immense bio-resources which can be utilized to spur economic growth and development in the region.

Objective of the study:

This paper focussed on identifying and reviewing policies in eastern Africa that support bioeconomy development. The gaps and statuses identified provides the impetus for advocating for a bioeconomy policy and strategy in the region.

Rationale for EOA:

Economies in the region are primarily dependent on natural resource across different sectors. Therefore, building the region's capacity to harness them will be very key for economic development. This can be facilitated through bioeconomy policies and strategies to fully harness the opportunities these resources present.

Methodology:

This study used both primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data was obtained from relevant publications and online resources/ grey literature through desk studies whereas primary data was obtained through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) in the eastern African countries including Burundi, Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania.

Key Findings:

- Whereas there are many existing policies related to bioeconomy development, there is no explicit bioeconomy policy or strategy in the region.
- Existing policies and strategies in eastern African countries that are closely related to bioeconomy development border mostly around the following:
 - Science, Technology and Innovation Policy/Strategy;
 - Environment Policy/Strategy;
 - Biotechnology Policy/Strategy;
 - Agricultural Policy/Strategy;
 - Industrial Policy/Strategy; and
 - Energy Policy/Strategy among others

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Bioeconomy development in eastern Africa is still not well developed as there is no explicit bioeconomy policy or strategy to support it. In a bid to address peculiar regional issues and the national levels and interests relating to bioeconomy development, there is need to have standalone bioeconomy policies and strategies that will guide the application of the rich and available knowledge base in the production and utilization of goods and services from bio-resources for economic advancement across all sectors of the economy at the national and regional levels. Nevertheless, there exist national development agendas, visions and other related policies and strategies which can provide a good enabling environment to build the bioeconomy strategy/policy at the national and regional levels.