

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF FOREST MANAGEMENT

Working Paper

Stored Carbon in Biomass Products-opportunities for sustainable forestry in India –a review study*

H S Gupta¹

ABSTRACT

The products made from biomass, particularly wood- sequester carbon in them. Thus wood plays a major role in combating climate change. Studies indicate that the amount of carbon stored in forest products is increasing by about 150 million tons per year, equivalent to removing 540 million tons of CO₂ from the atmosphere per year. In terms of employment the wood products industry generates 54 man-hours per tonne of dry wood, compared to only 2 man-hours in the bio-energy sector. With respect to the carbon cycle, the wood-based product industry thus provides far greater benefits in terms of employment and value added than direct burning of wood.

Carbon storage in large quantity can be achieved if better wood utilization and preservation techniques are practiced. From the perspective of CO₂ storage, the most desirable situation for forest and forest products can be through extended rotation age and production of goods, which last long. This will lead to carbon being fixed in the woody form, which is durable. The paper reviews the social, ecological and economical dimension of this issue and also discusses the some activities by which, long-term carbon sequestration in wood production can be further achieved.

Also the related policy issues have been discussed in the Indian context, which may contribute to sustainable forestry in India.

¹ Professor & Chairperson, Area of Technical Forestry, Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal, India