

Demand for Energy in a Rural Economy: A Micro Study

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INTRODUCTION

The rural sector of our country largely use non-commercial energy sources. Villagers use fire-wood, charcoal, agricultural and animal residues, human and animal muscle power for different activities. According to the Report of the Working Group on Energy Policy (Planning Commission, 1979) the commercial fuels account for about 20 p.c. and non-commercial over 80 p.c. in India. The major source of fuel energy is fire-wood which often contributes as high as 88.5 p.c. while animal dung and other resources 8.3 p.c. and 3.4 p.c. respectively of this sector of consumption.

The purpose and pattern of energy consumption in rural areas depend on various economic and non-economic factors such as size of landholding, agriculture and cropping pattern, types of soil, source of irrigation, economic activity of the household, income level, availability of fuels, level of entrepreneurship, stages of economic development, education, standard of living, housing structure, composition of household members, distance of market, topography, altitude of the area, sun direction and religious taboos (Satsangi and Goutam, 1983).

The above facts indicate the necessity of carrying out micro studies on the pattern of energy consumption, actual availability of local resources in the rural economies. The objective of the present paper is to make an attempt in this direction. For our work we have selected Kaikhali village located in Southern West Bengal characterised by energy scarcity. This village seems to be most suitable for a micro study in view of its remoteness, economic condition and richness in renewable energy potential. (Bondyopadhyay, 1979, Sen Sharma, 1987).

In this paper we shall try to obtain the necessary data base on the basis of sample survey of household and other sectors to make an assessment of the demand-supply and short-fall in the energy