

The role of bioenergy among the other forestry uses - case study from Republic of Karelia

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The Republic of Karelia is one of the most advanced regions in forestry sector among other regions of northwestern Russia (NW Russia) due to its proximity to European markets and plays key part in domestic and international wood supply.

As about half of the land cover is dominated by forests, therefore the society attaches great importance and value to that. Moreover, than 20% of the population in the Republic of Karelia is living in rural areas. It engages people directly with land by using firewood for heating, collection of non-wood timber products and other activities. Recently use of firewood transferred to more advanced form (wood chips, pellets, briquettes etc.) to increase efficiency of transportation and cost-competitiveness. Thus, the study explores for the first time the perception of professionals and forestry students towards bioenergy among the other forest uses in Republic of Karelia. The interviews were carried out in form of structured questionnaire form, where 111 individuals have responded in Republic of Karelia. As of importance to local economy respondents placed bioenergy rather low in comparison with other types of land uses. Therefore, mining (5.6), clear felling (5.6) and construction (5.4) are highly ranked in terms of impact to local economy, while bioenergy due to its limited use and understanding of the concept is ranked lower.

Table 1. Economic impact to local economy

Factor	Mc	SD	Importance of factor					
			Low		Moderate		High	
			N	%	N	%	N	%
Selective and gradual felling	4,9	1,626	8	7	62	56	41	37
Clear felling	5,6	1,503	6	5	38	34	67	60
Wild-life tourism*, **	4,7	1,646	14	13	62	56	35	32
Infrastructural tourism*	5,1	1,672	9	8	51	46	51	46
Bioenergy*	4,1	1,737	25	23	60	55	25	23
Constructions	5,4	1,437	7	6	44	40	60	54
Mining	5,6	1,290	4	4	47	42	60	54
Agriculture	4,4	1,553	13	12	70	63	28	25
Peat production*, **	3,9	1,572	26	23	67	60	18	16

* p < 0.05 – by occupation

** p < 0.05 – by gender

cMean ranking are based on seven-point scale, where 1 = very low and 7= greatly high importance

The results of the study in Republic of Karelia form a solid background and pool of knowledge regarding the perceptions towards land uses in Republic of Karelia and its impact to local economy. As it can be seen bioenergy should be promoted

further among regional and district level by decision makers to promote the awareness and potential economic benefits which are partly hidden at the moment.

Key words: bioenergy, land use, Republic of Karelia, attitudes, values