

Bamboo: A Trendy and New Alternative to Wood

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Abstract : Bamboo is getting worldwide attention over the last 20 to 30 years due to numerous uses and it is regarded as the closest material that can be used as substitute to wood. In the domestic market, high quality bamboo products are sold in high-end markets while lower quality products are generally sold to medium and low income consumers. The global market in 2006 stands at about 7 billion US dollars and was projected to increase to US\$ 17 B from 2015 to 2020. The Philippines had been actively producing and processing bamboo products for the furniture, handicrafts and construction industry. It was however in 2010 that the Philippine bamboo industry was formalized by virtue of Executive Order 879 that stated that the Philippine bamboo industry development is made a priority program of the government and created the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Council (PBIDC) to provide the overall policy and program directions of the program for all stakeholders. At present, the most extensive use of bamboo is for the manufacture of engineered bamboo for school desks for all public schools as mandated by EO 879. Also, engineered bamboo products are used for high-end construction and furniture as well as for handicrafts. Development of cheap adhesives, preservatives, and finishing chemicals from local species of plants, development of economical methods of drying and preservation, product development and processing of lesser-used species of bamboo, development of processing tools, equipment and machineries are the strategies that will be employed to reduce the price and mainstream engineered bamboo products in the local and foreign market. In addition, processing wastes from bamboo can be recycled into fuel products such as charcoal are already in use. The more exciting possibility, however, is the production of bamboo pellets that can be used as a substitute for wood pellets for heating, cooking and generating electricity.

Keywords : bamboo charcoal and light distillates, engineered bamboo, furniture and handicraft industries, housing and construction, pellets

Conference Title : ICAF 2016 : International Conference on Agriculture and Forestry Sciences

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : May 23-24, 2016