

RECOGNIZING THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL CHARCOAL STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (NCSAP) IN THE REALIZATION OF THE NATIONAL CLEAN COOKING ENERGY STRATEGY (NCCES) TARGETS

1. Background

The importance of the charcoal sub-sector to the national economy and community livelihoods in Tanzania and beyond cannot be overemphasized. Charcoal is the largest source of household energy in urban areas for cooking and heating in Tanzania. In 2014 it was estimated that charcoal generated at least 1 billion US\$ per annum in revenues. In 2020, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT) estimated the contribution of charcoal to the forest sector's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to be 44.2%, standing out as one of the most important forest products contributing to the national economy. Despite the unrefuted significance of charcoal for the country, it has been established that inefficient production, pricing, and use of charcoal are among the factors that contribute to forest degradation and deforestation in Tanzania, where the annual deforestation rate is estimated to stand at 469,420 ha. In 2009, it was established that both central and local governments in Tanzania were losing about 100 million US\$ per year due to a failure to effectively regulate the charcoal sub-sector and collect associated tax and non-tax revenues. The aforementioned reasons, among others, prompted the government to provide strategic direction and guidance to the charcoal sub-sector to improve efficiency along the charcoal value chains and enhance the contribution of the sub-sector to the national economy and community livelihoods.

2. Methodology

A study commissioned by TaTEDO – SESO on the Analysis of Related Policies and Legal Framework Hindering Sustainable Charcoal Value Chain Promotion in Tanzania formed the basis for the development of this policy brief. The study was financed by the European Union through the TaTEDO-Sustainable Energy Services Organization (TaTEDO-SESO). The main methods during the study included literature review and consultations with some key informants including government ministries, development partners, NGOs, the private sector, and community representatives involved in various nodes of the charcoal value chain. A validation workshop was organized for triangulation purposes.

Plate 1: The National Charcoal Strategy and Action Plan 2021 – 2031)

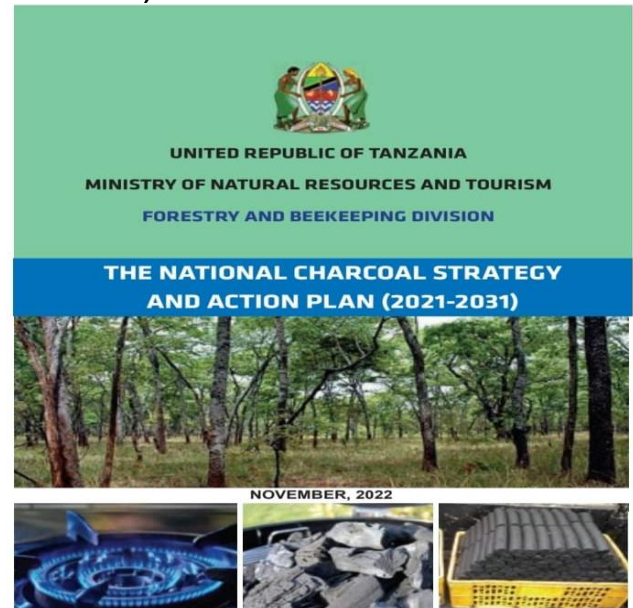
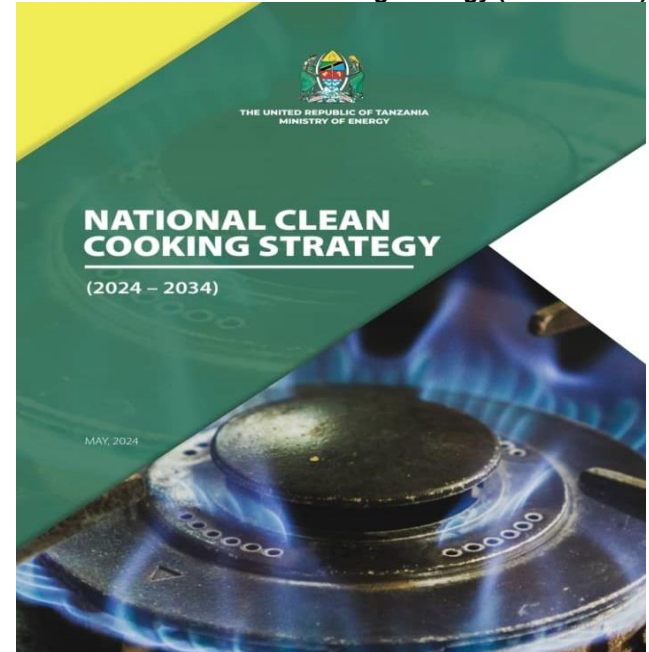


Plate 2: National Clean Cooking Strategy (2024 – 2034)



3. Key Findings

3.1. The development of the NCCAP was justified
The National Charcoal Strategy and Action Plan (NCSAP) covering the 2021 – 2031 period was developed to address several gaps inherent in the charcoal sub-sector in the country. At the national level, there was a serious gap in terms of the absence of a general plan to achieve long-term objectives and sustainability of charcoal as a forest product and the

sub-sector. Both the National Forest Policy of 1998 and the Forest Act of 2002 recognize charcoal as one of the forest products that require special attention because of the threat posed by the product to the environment. The serious need for the Ministry to take strategic actions to ensure that the product is produced and used sustainably and continues to contribute to the national economy was evident. Unfortunately, the two most important strategic documents at the Ministry namely the Strategic Plan (2021/22 – 2025/26) and the National Forest Policy Implementation Strategy (NFPIS) (2021 – 2031) did not sufficiently serve as strategic documents for the charcoal sub-sector in the country. The Ministry Strategic Plan rightly points out the overdependence on charcoal and firewood as sources of energy, inefficient technologies in processing forest resources, poor management of forest wastes, and limited market of forest products including charcoal as some of the major challenges facing the natural resources sector in Tanzania and recommends that a National Charcoal Development Strategy be developed and operationalized by June 2026. The NFPIS has set targets of increasing both the consumption of alternative charcoal in urban areas from 100 to 200,000 tonnes and sustainable charcoal production to 50% by June 2031. It also focuses on reducing logging waste in charcoal production from 80% to 30% by June 2031. However, given the fact that the charcoal sub-sector has multiple stakeholders' interests and different approaches, a responsive and well-elaborated coordination mechanism is required to address the impeding sub-sector development factors. Thus, considering the challenges facing entire charcoal value chains in the country, a specific National Charcoal Strategy and Action Plan was imperative.

3.2 Strategic directions provided by the NCSAP

The NCSAP provides strategic direction and national-level targets in relation to sustainable charcoal production and utilization, inclusive policy, legislation, and institutional frameworks, supportive functions along the charcoal value chains, adoption of alternative energy, and inter-sectoral coordination for improved efficiency. The Strategy also defines the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the implementation process. To that effect, the Implementation of the National Charcoal Strategy (NCS) and Action Plan (AP) is intended to focus on addressing issues that require attention in the charcoal sub-sector including sustainability of charcoal value chains, sectoral and cross-sectoral coordination, marketing, and transportation, revenue collection and re-investment, alternatives cooking energy, legal and institutional framework.

3.3 The NCSAP is not implemented

It is unfortunate that since the completion (June 2021) and approval (November 2022) of the national charcoal strategy and action plan to serve as a policy

instrument in support of the National Forest Policy of 1998, the Forest Act of 2002, and the national forest policy implementation strategy (2021-2030) there has been no effort at all to implement the national charcoal strategy. The strategy seems to be uncelebrated. There has been no single guideline, Government Notice (GN), or any directive by the Ministry to enforce the implementation of the national charcoal strategy and action plan. The ministry has not assigned any officer to take the responsibility of championing the implementation of the national charcoal strategy. Consultations conducted at the ministry level involving several ministries during the data collection phase of the reported assignment revealed the existence of perceptions that the charcoal strategy works against the current national strive towards adoption of clean cooking energy as spearheaded by the national clean cooking strategy (2024 – 2034).

3.4 The NCSAP does not contradict the National Clean Cooking Energy Strategy

The NCSAP does not contradict the NCCES at all. The national charcoal strategy and action plan is one of the key policy instruments that supports sustainable charcoal value chains and the transition towards national clean cooking energy targets. Two of its strategic objectives (**namely SO2 Enhanced production and use of alternative charcoal; and SO4 Enhanced adoption of alternative cooking energy**) do promote clean cooking and alternative sources of energy in order to lower the demand for charcoal as the country transits towards clean cooking solutions. The focus of the NCSAP is to ensure that the little charcoal that shall be used during the transition to clean cooking energy is sustainably produced and efficiently utilized while we promote clean cooking alternatives.

4. Recommendations

It is recommended that the NCSAP should be implemented and championed to support the national clean cooking energy strategy. Failure to implement the national charcoal strategy and action plan is likely to impact negatively on the national target of ensuring that 80 percent of Tanzanians use clean cooking solutions by the year 2034. This is because the charcoal strategy puts forward strategic actions and targets that promote clean cooking, support energy switching, and call for sustainable production and efficient utilization of charcoal as the country transitions towards clean cooking energy. The NCCES clearly emphasizes that to achieve greater percentages of clean cooking energy utilization at the household level substantial awareness creation and sensitization towards decreased use of unclean energy and increased use of clean energy shall be required. These elements are already embedded in the NCSAP implying that the charcoal strategy is in support of the national clean energy strategy and, as such complements each other towards broader and more beneficial national goals.

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