

The concern. The report says millions of trees are being cut without being replanted.

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KAMPALA. Ms Monica Nandawula has of recent faced numerous supply interruptions that have made her income from her charcoal business unreliable.

At first, Ms Nandawula thought the suppliers were snubbing her, owing to her small stock.

"I can even wait for a week without being supplied and when you get a chance, they give it you at a high price," says Ms Nandawula, who now buys a bag of charcoal at Shs50,000 and sells it at Shs70,000.

Five years ago, Ms Nandawula used to purchase the same bag at Shs30,000 from suppliers.

The high charcoal prices experienced by Ms Nandawula are a microcosmic projection of a looming national charcoal and firewood crisis as contained in a new report titled 'National Charcoal Survey for Uganda 2016'.

The report, which was carried out by government with support from the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), warns that the country is running out of trees for charcoal and firewood production.

It indicates that the main source of wood for charcoal production is from privately owned forests (43 per cent), central forest reserves (22 per cent),

Uganda faces charcoal, firewood crisis - report



Looming crisis. A truck carries sacks of charcoal in Nwoya District recently. PHOTO BY JAMES OWICH

farm trees (20 per cent) and others, representing 14 per cent.

The report says 41 per cent of charcoal producers cut more than 101 trees and shrub species although none has established dedicated forest plantations for charcoal production.

The majority of charcoal producers (89 per cent) do not sort tree species before burning them, says the report.

This indiscriminate cutting of trees, Mr Simon Peter Weredwong, the UNDP green charcoal project manager, says threatens the biodiversity of the country.

"Dedicated fast-growing tree plantations of approximately 15,000 hectares per district for charcoal production should be established," the report says, in its recommendation on

how to arrest the situation.

"Unutilised government land should be leased to investors to plant tree deliberately for charcoal production," the report adds.

The other option that Ugandans should adopt to lower charcoal and wood consumption is by using improved charcoal stoves, the report adds.

CONSUMPTION

Trends. The report says 4,961 metric tonnes of charcoal is used in Uganda per day, with Kampala alone consuming 837 metric tonnes per day during the dry season and 1,017 metric tonnes during the rainy season.