



A clean cooking strategy

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In its drive towards sustainability and energy security, India must ensure an awareness of better cooking fuel choices

Highlights

- Energy use, a key indicator of living standards across the world, is also instrumental in raising it. The choice of cooking fuel in households (especially rural) has a huge impact on living conditions especially on air quality for women and children.
- On an average in India, household spending on cooking fuel accounts for around 5-6% of its total expenditure.
- Factors such as socio-economic (availability and easy access, also determined by household income and price of fuel, education and awareness), culture or lifestyle, and, to a large extent, government policies also influence cooking fuel choice.
- Affordable, reliable and clean energy for cooking is essential not only for reducing health and environmental impacts but also helping women to do more productive work and developing the rural economy.
- Cooking fuels emit substantial amounts of toxic pollutants (respirable particles, carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen and sulphur, benzene, formaldehyde and polyaromatic compounds) which contribute to indoor air pollution.
- Among the various fuel options available (firewood, pellet, biogas, kerosene, liquefied petroleum gas or LPG, piped natural gas or PNG) biogas accounts for the lowest effective greenhouse gas emission; PNG and then LPG are next.

What needs to be done to promote Biogas?

- To promote biogas in rural and semi-urban areas, adopting the service-based enterprise model with suitable resource availability offers a sustainable approach. It will also help self-drive the programme.
- The model is being successfully implemented in Hoshiarpur, Punjab using a 100 cubic meter biogas plant. The plant supplies clean and piped cooking biogas to 44 households and a school every day.
- To further enable a consumer to freely make cooking fuel choices, consumption-based subsidies need to be replaced with a functional subsidy that is provided on the basis of household income levels and local variables.
- Possibility of leakages must also be eliminated by ensuring that subsidies of any kind are provided only through direct benefit transfer. S
- uch an approach will provide a neutral thrust and promotion to different types of cooking fuels on the basis of their original virtues.

Conclusion

As India takes a long-term view on sustainability and energy security, it is important to create an environment where its citizens are aware of the options and make their energy choices based on the nature of the fuel and not because of socio-economic constraints.

Source: [The Hindu](#)



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