J Fundam Renewable Energy Appl 2017, 7:10 (Suppl)
DOI: 10.4172/2090-4541-C1-048

8th International Conference on

BIOFUELS, BIOENERGY & BIOECONOMY

December 04-05, 2017 | Sao Paulo, Brazil

Recent advances and future prospects of bioenergy in India

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India has abundant capacity to produce reliable, price competitive and ecologically sustainable bioenergy to meet the energy demand of domestic and commercial sector. A few decade of experience with modern biomass technologies for thermal, motive power and electricity generation applications exists in India. Advancements in biomass energy conversion are being made through enhanced efficiency of biomass energy conversion technologies, improved fuel processing technologies and enhanced efficiency of end-use technologies. Versatility of modern biomass technologies to use variety of biomass feedstock has enhanced the supply potential. Further, modernization in biomass energy use has happened in the recent past along three routes viz. (1) Improvement of technologies in traditional biomass applications such as for cooking and rural industries, (2) Process development for conversion of raw biomass to superior fuels (such as liquid fuels, gas and briquettes), and (3) Penetration of biomass based electricity generation technologies. These developments have opened new avenues for biomass energy in India to cope-up the energy security as well as environment concern. The modern technologies offer possibilities to convert biomass into synthetic gaseous or liquid fuels (like ethanol and methanol) and electricity. Lack of biomass energy market has been the primary barrier to the penetration of modern biomass technologies and the growing experience with modern biomass technologies suggests that technology push policies need to be substituted or augmented for large scale promotion of bioenergy in India.

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