

Marketing improved stoves in low-income countries

A guide for planners and practitioners

Improved stoves can result in tangible environmental, health and socio-economic benefits. However, despite their low cost and decades of initiatives disseminating and promoting them, stoves remain a low priority for hundreds of millions of potential users globally. Commercial approaches are increasingly being recognized as a way of achieving greater scale. These involve analysing markets, engaging entrepreneurs, and careful product development and pricing. They are particularly pertinent for emerging large-scale carbon-finance stove programmes, and marketing is a key component.

Filling a gap: a stove marketing resource

A series of informal consultations with household energy professionals, including a breakout-group at the PCIA Uganda forum in early 2009, indicate that there is demand for stove marketing resources. Many feel that this is a long-neglected aspect of programme design.

Much has been written about marketing. However, few resources focus on low-value products in developing countries. There is also a significant 'jargon barrier' to overcome in much of the literature.

We are proposing to develop a practical guide to marketing stoves in low-income countries. Its purpose will be to help governments, NGOs and private-sector bodies plan and implement more viable, sustainable and scalable initiatives. It would present a series of marketing tools, including how to:

- analyse the marketing environment;
- identify, segment and quantify the market;
- place customers at the core of product development;
- set prices appropriately, and assess willingness and ability to pay; and,
- promote and brand stoves.

Adapting an existing resource

EAWAG Switzerland recently published a handbook on marketing compost. It presents marketing principles in a way relevant to the developing world context, in language accessible to non-specialists.

The issues of promoting compost and stoves are notably similar: often both are low-cost, under-valued products with great environmental and human benefits, but which lack ready-made markets. This book could provide the basis for a similar stove marketing resource.

www.eawag.ch/organisation/abteilungen/sandec/publikationen/marketing_compost



Next steps

Most importantly, we need to further understand and quantify the demand for a stove marketing resource. Jonathan Rouse is conducting a more detailed consultation, as well as exploring sources of funding and potential bulk users. Subsequently we will refine the focus, content and format, invite contributions from practitioners and identify co-authors.

Please get in touch if you would like to contribute or comment. jonathan@hedconsulting.com