

Deforestation on the rise in Northern Regions

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Deforestation is assuming high proportions in the Northern Regions, especially the Upper East region as some unscrupulous persons have resorted to cutting down young trees to sell as fuel wood and charcoal.

The tree choppers use dangerous chemicals to uproot the trees without necessarily using chainsaws to cut them and by so doing avoid attracting Forest Officials and the community members.

On daily basis, trucks and pickups cart the wood from Pwalugu in the Talensi District of the Upper East Region and the Karimenga and Wulugu communities in the northern parts of the Northern Region that share boundaries with the Upper East Region.

A Ghana News Agency (GNA) investigations in the Upper East Region shows that the practice was widespread in the Bawku West District, as dealers in the fuel wood business heap them during the dry season to make more profit when the rains set in because demand for these products are high around that time.

These activities are done in the full glare of Forest Guards and Police Officers, who look on unconcerned as these nefarious activities are perpetrated at the expense of the environment.

Economic trees such as shea, berries (Sibisibi) and Dawadawa trees among others, are harvested in large quantities for sale.

The Upper East Regional Director of the Forestry Commission, Mr James Kantonyel Ware, explained to the GNA that the Commission was helpless because the law allows the harvesting and use of dead wood for domestic purposes.

He said community members harvest the wood products on the pretext of using them for domestic purposes, however, they sell them to firewood dealers, who also run around the liberal laws that allow domestic use of fuel wood to exploit the environment.

Mr Ware said his outfit has had various interactions with the Assemblies in the region to try and establish bye-laws on deforestation, and that, even though the responses had not been that encouraging, there had efforts to coerce the Assemblies to have such bye-laws.

The Regional Director suggested the provision of alternative livelihoods for community members, strong community rules and regulations on the environment as well as continues education on attitudinal change, as part of measures to address the problem.

He further suggested the growing of rosewood plantations, which grow very well in the savannah area, as an alternative for domestic and other uses.

Mr Aware noted that the community members could not be denied totally, the right to use wood products from the forest reserves but warned however that, indiscriminate and excessive use of the reserves would not be tolerated.

He said as part of measures to preserve the reserves, an alternative option of using liquefied gas was suggested, but the country's economic situation seemed to have pushed the idea to the background because the communities could not afford the cost of LP gas.

The Director reiterated the need for the District Assemblies to take issues concerning the environment seriously, especially those related to deforestation because the assemblies bye-laws on deforestation were not strong enough to instill discipline.

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