

# Diversified tree products in the east and central African economy

JOSHUA K. CHEBOIWO AND JONAH K. KIPSAT



The East African region could reap economically from proper nurture, production and processing of various forest products for both regional and overseas markets. The products include roundwood, sawnwood, wood-based panels, pulp and paper products.

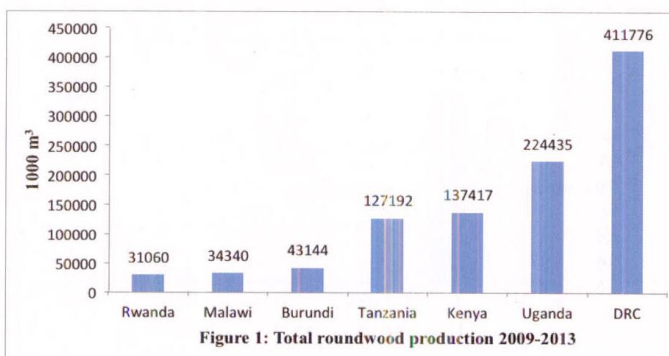
According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Report (2009-2013), the East and Central Africa region has varied forest cover from country to country. The seven (7) major countries are Kenya, Uganda, the DRC, Tanzania, Rwanda, Malawi and Burundi.

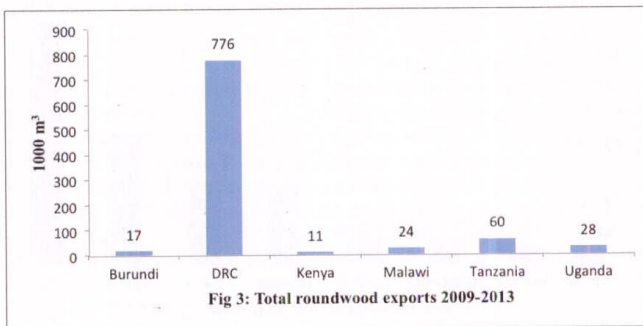
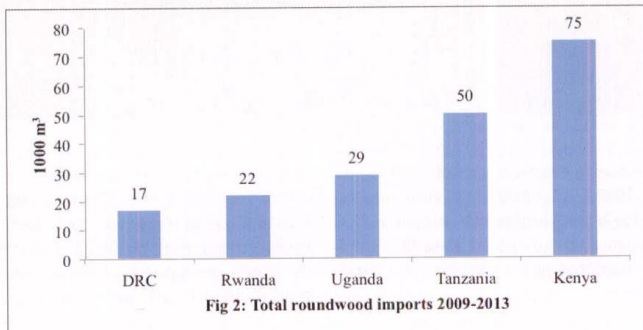
## Roundwood production

The term 'roundwood' encompasses all wood that is round, felled or otherwise harvested and removed from forests. Its production in the East and Central Region recorded a significant increase (2.6%) during the 2009-2013 period

when it went from an average of 200.5 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2009 to 205.7 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2013. The DRC was the largest producer with on average 82.4 million m<sup>3</sup> which accounts for about 49 % of the total roundwood volume produced in the region (Figure 1).

Imports of roundwood into the region rose steadily from 41,000 m<sup>3</sup> in 2009 to 62,000 m<sup>3</sup> in 2013 (Figure 2). Kenya was the biggest net importer mainly from the DRC and Tanzania. The exports from the region increased steadily in 2010 and 2011 but declined in 2012 and





2013 (Figure 3); the major exporters were the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania (Figure 2).

### Sawnwood production

The sawnwood production of both hard- and soft-woods increased by 68% from 696,000 m<sup>3</sup> in 2009 to 1.166 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2013 (Figure 4). The largest increases in production were in Uganda (276%), Kenya (108%) and Tanzania (100%), mainly due to increased log availability. Production was stable in the DRC, Rwanda and Malawi. Burundi experienced a decline in production by 37% to 53,000 m<sup>3</sup> in 2013 as compared to 83,000 m<sup>3</sup> in 2009.

The East and Central Africa region countries imported 46,600 m<sup>3</sup> of sawnwood valued at \$53.7 million in 2009-2013 period (Figure 5). Kenya was the major importing country followed by Tanzania, the DRC, and Uganda respectively.

Sawnwood export trade was dominated by the DRC, Tanzania and Malawi each exporting an average of over 250,000m<sup>3</sup> during the period (Figure 6). The exports were mainly destined for Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda.

### Wood-based panels

Production of wood-based panels (includes particle board, fibre-boards, plywood) increased by 11.4% in the period 2009-2013. In 2013, the largest producers were Kenya (83,000m<sup>3</sup>), Malawi (23,000 m<sup>3</sup>) and Uganda (21,000m<sup>3</sup>). The DRC and Tanzania had a minimal production of 5,000m<sup>3</sup> and 4,000m<sup>3</sup> respectively (Figure 7). There was no production in Rwanda and Burundi.

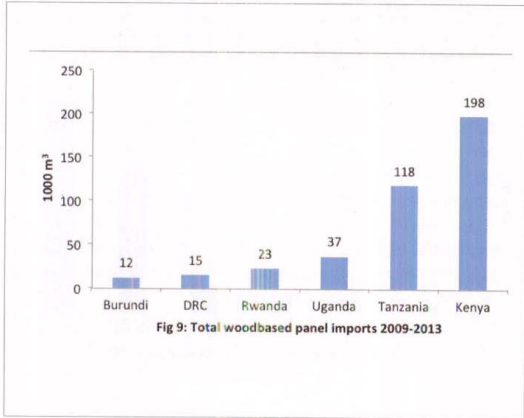
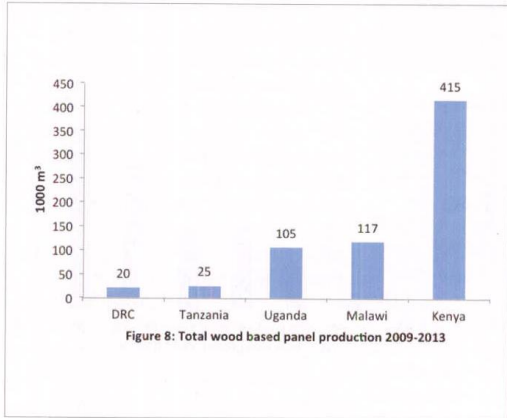
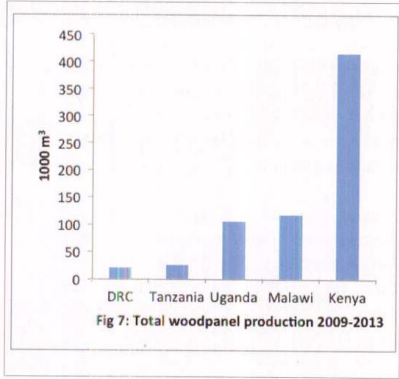
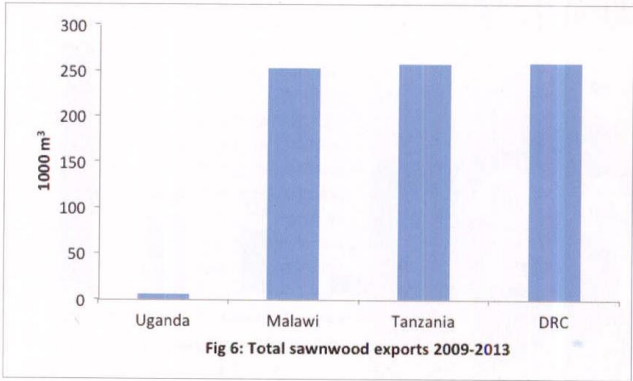
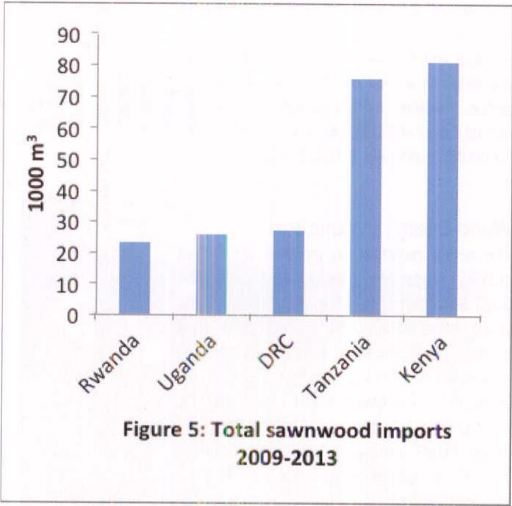
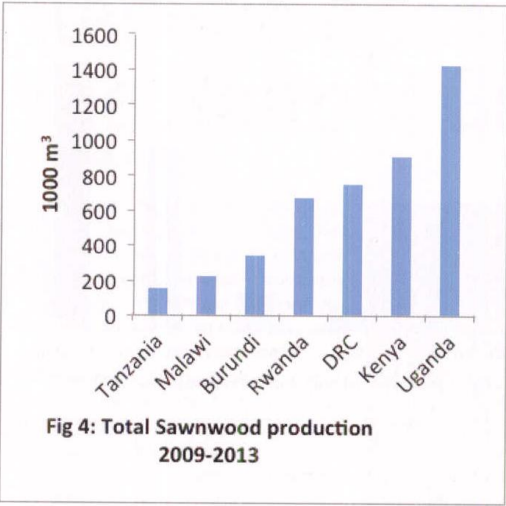
The imports of wood-based panels recorded a steady increase in the region during the period, with Kenya and Tanzania being the leading importers (Figure 8). Malawi was the leading exporter of wood-based panels and also recorded highest increase during the period followed by Kenya (Figure 9).

### Pulp and recovered paper

Wood pulp production was relatively constant during the 2009-2013 period. Tanzania was the only major producer, producing an average of 56,000 MT per annum. Kenya was the only country producing recovered paper with an average quantity of 38,000 MT per annum (Figure 10). Tanzania was the major producer of chemical wood pulp producing an average of 44,000MT per annum.

Pulp and recovered paper imports in the region increased by 5.3% as a result of growing demand, with Uganda increasing its imports by a hundred and thirty three (133%) during the period. Kenya was the leading importer with a total of 1.209 Million MT, followed by Uganda





359,000 MT and Tanzania 312,000MT (Figure 11). Tanzania was the major exporter with an average annual quantity of 25,600 MT which translated to a total of 128,00 MT during the period, followed by Kenya with an average annual export of 17,600 MT and total exports of 88,000MT during the 2009-2013 period (Figure 12).

### Wood Energy Production

The region recorded an increase of thirteen (13%) in production of wood energy during the 2009-2013 period with 5.9 million MT in 2009 to 6.2 Million MT in 2013 (Figure 12). Total wood charcoal production stood at an average of 6.261 million MT in 2013. The main wood charcoal producers in the region in 2013 were the DRC (2,243,000MT), Tanzania (1,762,000 MT), Kenya 1,006,000 MT and Uganda 1,000,000 MT. Malawi (527,000 MT ), Burundi (60,000 MT) and Rwanda (48,000 MT) were the smallest producers. The DRC and Tanzania were the largest consumers of wood charcoal in the region. The wood charcoal and wood residue were exhaustively consumed in each of the countries implying that the growing demand is still unmet. Kenya was the only country producing and consuming wood residue with an average production of 36,000 MT in the period 2009-2013.

*Joshua K. Cheboiwo is the Deputy Director, Socioeconomics, Policy and Governance, Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI)*  
 Email: [jcheboiw@kefri.org](mailto:jcheboiw@kefri.org) or [jkchemangare@yahoo.com](mailto:jkchemangare@yahoo.com)  
 Jonah K. Kipsat

