

R&D AND ADOPTION ISSUES FOR FOUR SHORT-ROTATION AFFORESTATION/AGROFORESTRY TECHNOLOGIES: RESULTS OF FOCUS GROUPS CONDUCTED IN QUEBEC AND THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES

Sylvain Masse* and Pierre P. Marchand

Natural Resources Canada - Canadian Forest Service

Through a series of focus groups conducted among landowners of Quebec and the Canadian Prairies, this study identifies perceived R&D and adoption issues for four short-rotation afforestation/agroforestry technologies for bioenergy generation and other uses. These technologies are: short-rotation intensive culture of willow or hybrid poplar, block plantation of hybrid poplar, willow-based riparian buffer systems, and alley cropping using willow or hybrid poplar. Twenty-three focus groups were conducted with 81 landowners with an early adopter profile. The discussions on each technology were preceded by a popularized presentation on the technology. Besides the notes and recordings of the discussions, a written questionnaire was used to collect specific qualitative information. The exploratory approach designed for the study proved effective and efficient. Perceived advantages and disadvantages were identified. The participants' interest increased for two of the four technologies. The intentions to apply a technology in the short term turned out to be very good for three of the four technologies. The lower intentions expressed for alley cropping reflect the preliminary state of knowledge on this technology. For each of the four technologies, the results allowed us to draw a list of perceived R&D and adoption issues regarding technical, financial, legal, environmental, and other aspects. Since these issues are based on perceptions, their relevance and importance will have to be specified and validated with researchers and other stakeholders. The results also confirmed the importance of specifying the impact of policy frameworks and incentive programs on the adoption of these technologies.

KEY WORDS: short-rotation crops, afforestation, agroforestry, bioenergy, willow, hybrid poplar, social factors

*Corresponding author: Laurentian Forestry Centre, 1055 du P.E.P.S., P.O. Box 10380, Stn. Sainte-Foy, Quebec City, QC, G1V 4C7 Canada; Phone: (418) 648-7152; Email: smasse@nrcan.gc.ca