Biomass Briquettes: Goa's project to turn agri waste into green fuel

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Citing air and land pollution caused by open burning of crop residue, the Goa government has decided to control this practice by converting tree and bio-waste into green fuel, named biomass briquettes.

The briquettes are compressed and are a proven method of producing energy from waste. They contain various organic materials such as solid waste, agricultural waste, rice husk, among others, which are all referred to as biomass.

The intended biomass-based renewable energy project is the first-of-its-kind in Goa which will help decrease the burning of agricultural waste and open dumping and help bring down the carbon footprint by substituting fossil fuels with biomass briquettes.

A senior official told the media that this project has been introduced to awaken the local community about the significance of waste management, the health risks caused due to burning or decomposing it in open fields. The aim is to empower the enterprising lot amongst the local community with relevant training and development programs to engage in the biomass supply chain and then densifying the fuel to briquette. Other aims include establishing a Swachh Bharat campaign and social forestry over the project area.

He also stated that currently, Goa's requirement of biomass briquette is around 170 tons per day. It is being provided to enterprises from neighbouring states.

Verna Industrial Estate itself needs around 100 tons per day for the boilers working on biomass briquettes after the prohibition on furnace oil. Biomass in Goa currently remains unused and briquettes are obtained from other states.

The Punjab Renewable Energy Systems Private Ltd (PRESPL) and Goa Energy Development Agency (GEDA) will together establish the project in Goa. GEDA had floated a tender to attract developers to establish a biomass briquetting plant with a processing volume of 2,000 kg per hour.

The official stated that the plant will be established at Saligao and will be installed under a design, build, operate, finance, and transfer basis for ten years.

The proposed plant capacity is 20 tonne per day. The official stated that PRESPL successfully applied for this tender and obtained the work order to establish this biomass briquetting plant. PRESPL will be utilising the tender coconut, tree, coconut leaves and other biomass available in the area for the project.

The official said that, additionally, a grid-connected solar project will be installed on the rooftops of the plant. GEDA will offer 3,520 sq m of land at the project location free of cost to PRESPL.