

Forest Fruits in Livelihoods

Policy Briefing Note to Non-Governmental and Community-Based Organisations

The research issue

Forest fruits contribute to the livelihoods of poor peoples in many parts of the tropics, but restricted access to natural resources, weak markets and poor information limit the realisation of benefits to forest-dependent poor peoples. Identifying these constraints can enhance livelihood strategies through promoting policy options which enable effective utilisation of forest resources.

This research concerns forest fruits in the livelihoods of forest-margin communities in India.



The research area

In BR Hills and MM Hills of southern Karnataka, India, forest Tribal communities derive up to 60% of their cash income from forest products, with 15% derived solely from four forest fruit species: amla (*Phyllanthus emblica* and *P. indofischeri*), arle (*Terminalia chebula*) and seege (*Acacia concinna*).

Products are significant ingredients for the manufacture of food products and pharmaceuticals, but commercialisation is regulated.

Research findings

The Soligas in the MM Hills do not carry out any value addition to forest fruits and are dependent on buyers contracted under the restrictive State NTFP marketing policy in terms of prices and competitive outlets. In the BR Hills, Tribal peoples have formed a cooperative which buys raw fruits from the State-authorized contractor and process them into chutney and pickle to be sold on to grocers and consumers, thereby enjoying the higher returns derived from value-addition and local association.

Moreover, formation of community-based groups and creation of simple extension materials in vernacular languages will enable the poor to achieve the objectives of sustainable utilisation and marketing.

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Initial Uptake of Project Output

Formation of a community marketing organisation and Self-Help Groups has occurred at the Malè Mahadeshwara Hills site, India



Recommendations

Constraints to the enhancement of livelihoods through improved use of forest fruit products, and approaches to overcome these constraints are presented below:

Constraint	Findings	Action
Access to markets	<p>Local cooperatives and on-site partial value addition enhances income</p> <p>Harvesters respond to evolving market demand for a wide range of forest fruits as inputs to national and international food and pharmaceutical products</p>	<p>Semi-domestication of fruit and other species through <i>in situ</i> conservation and agroforestry on degraded forest lands should be developed in communities such as Ponnachi, Kombudikki and Chengadi</p> <p>Knowledge transfer of processing and marketing skills and organisational forms</p> <p>Introduction of necessary finance, technology and infrastructure</p>
Access to knowledge	<p>Indigenous knowledge of tree ecology and management promotes sustainable utilisation - but is not shared equally among forest-dependent groups</p>	<p>Knowledge transfer for improved forest management between communities (B>R. Hills, M.M.Hills and similar communities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exchange of indigenous technical knowledge • extension of new knowledge for sustainable forest management

Other livelihood strategies

The study highlights the limited role of forest fruits in cash income generation, yet also shows the important role of NTFPs in general within livelihood strategies of these communities. Alternative sources of income must complement that from forest fruits. In particular, improved access to labour markets and training will help diversify income sources.

Full Project Title: Enhancing the Role of Forest Fruits in Sustaining Livelihoods of Forest Margin Communities.

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