



NON TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS AND SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

FORESTRY COMMISSION



Importance of Non-Timber Forest Products in Sustainable Forest Management

Forests produce more than timber, wildlife and water. They are a vast storehouse for non-timber forest products (NTFPs) which have enormous social, economic and ecological value to the residents, communities and forests. They provide critical services, which include among others production, ecosystem and regulatory services. As such, forest resources should be sustainably managed in a way that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to benefit from them. Sustainable forest management (SFM) holds three fundamental standards, which include a socially acceptable and equitable forest management plan, an ecologically benign impact and a positive economic impact to local communities.

NTFPs are a source of optimism for the future of forests. These are biological resources of plant and animal origin, harvested from natural forests, man-made plantations, wooded land, farmlands, and trees outside forests and or domesticated. These products are vital sources of income, nutrition and sustenance for many communities. NTFPs also contribute to the improvement of livelihoods of rural communities by providing food, medicine, additional income, employment opportunities and foreign exchange earnings of the country.

By complementing wood-based management, they offer a basis for managing forests in a more sustainable way, thereby supporting biodiversity conservation. The health and functioning

of the forest ecosystems and the associated rural communities depend on the sustainable management of the NTFP resources.

Government, conservation and development agencies and non-government organisations have encouraged the marketing and sale of NTFPs as a way of boosting income for communities and indirectly conserving forests. Upon realising those NTFPs and other forests products are of greater value, technical and traditional forest management systems were devised. These include sacred controls, pragmatic controls, civil contract and initiation of new controlling systems.

Forest Management Systems

Sacred controls are norms of tree use and protection based on folk or traditional religious belief and enforced by individual internalization of the norms, community sanction and by religions/traditional leaders. In these controls, religious beliefs are manipulated to protect specific trees and regulate fruit collection, thus contributing to SFM.

Pragmatic controls are the general prohibition on cutting fruit trees. For example, not cutting *Acacias* for pod production or *Colophospermum mopane* to enhance mopane worms.

Civil contract is when claim is made on individual or homestead basis, for example homemade beehives left in the forest are usually not touched for fear that they may be fixed, thus indirectly promoting forests conservation.

The initiation of new controlling institutions, norms and rules (Village

development committees or natural resource committees) of tree use and protection through rule enforcement and projects establishment also promotes Sustainable Forest Management

Technical organisations like Forestry commission also regulate the extraction of forestry products. Forestry Commission is also responsible for forest administration and covers state forestry management the conservation of timber and non-timber resources, afforestation, woodland management, regulation and support services such as forest research, education, extension and resources survey and assessment.

Some obstacles restrain sustainable forest management related to ecological change, socio-economic change and institutional factors. Thus, management approaches and practices of NTFPs in sustainable forest managements need to be adapted to local ecological, economical and sociopolitical circumstances.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Sustainable Forest Management

Responsibility of NTFPs management for forest sustainability should be given not only to experts (foresters) but should also include traditional knowledge through involvement of stakeholders in management. Further research on possibilities of NTFPs management for forest sustainability and its related services is needed. Awareness on the importance of NTFPs should also be raised through various means at a larger scale to strengthen existing policies, programs or projects related to sustainable forest management.



Baobab, Bush meal, Harurwa, Honey, ilala/african ivory nut palm, Marula, Masau, Mazhanje, Mopane worm, Tamarind indica, Tsubvu, Ximenia caffra/americana, Berchemia discolor (nyii), S spinosa (matamba), D. mespiliformis(shumha)

These are useful substances, materials or commodities obtained from forests besides the wood including fruits, insects, nuts, medicines, leaves, grasses, vegetables and fibers.

Non-Timber Forest Products of economic importance

NTFPs of economic importance in Zimbabwe also include nuts which are processed into oils and cosmetics. The oils are produced from kernels of trees like marula, baobab and manketi. The oils fetch good price on the market (US\$ 25/kg) and is mainly used by cosmetic companies in Europe. The oils are rich in vitamins and elements that keep the skin healthy and looking young, repair

damaged skin, offer protection against the sun and improved hair growth and health. The oil can be used as they are or blended with lotions and soaps

Marula fruits can be consumed raw or be processed into a brew and jam. It is used to produce the famous Amarula wine. The kernels are crushed and the nuts can be consumed directly or they mixed with nutty foods like chocolates. The nuts are pressed to get oil and butter. The butter is used traditionally in relish mixtures and oil processed into cosmetics. The by-product shells and pulp can be given to livestock as stock feed.

Baobab fruits are edible and highly nutritious NTFPs. They have high vitamin C, calcium, phosphorus, iron, sodium, magnesium potassium, proteins and lipids content; and therefore, offer essential nutrition. Fruit pulp is eaten raw as snack or mixed in porridge; processed into juice, jam, ice-lollies and sweets. Fruit shells are used as fuel in fish smoking and shell ashes are used for making soda. Roasted seeds can be mixed in sauces, or used as a substitute for coffee. Seeds can also be used to extract cooking oil. The oil is used to make cosmetics. Leaves are eaten as condiment, only in times of hunger. Bark is mainly used to make ropes, but it can also be used to make mats, hats and crafts.

With adequate support and market linkages, NTFP value chains to improve the income generation and sustainability, particularly for remote and marginalized communities and ethnic groups.

Forestry Commission supports Non-Timber Based Forest Products Enterprises. A popular approach to ensuring sustainability is by promoting processing and value addition of NTFPs, woodland management, forest regulation and sustainable harvesting

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