



The Role of Non Timber Forest Products in Karnataka State

KEYWORDS

NTFPs, Employment, Market and Forest Policy

N. S. SATHEESH KUMAR

Dr. P. Jayashree

Research Scholar DOS in Geography Manasagangotri,
University of Mysore

Associate Professor DOS in Geography Manasagangotri
University of Mysore

ABSTRACT

Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) play an important role in both national and local economies. In some cases, the importance of these activities can be seen clearly from national statistics. In India, for example, more than 30 million people are employed in the non-timber forest product sector. In India over 50 million people are dependent on NTFPs for their subsistence and cash income. This provides 50 percent of household income for 20 to 30 per cent of rural population particularly for tribal. The conservation of forest wealth has become a major challenge in the whole of the country, including the state of Karnataka, because of ever-increasing pressures on already declining forest resources. The State of Karnataka is located between 11 30' and 18 30' N latitudes and 74 10" and 78 30" E longitudes and covers an area of 1, 91,790 sq.kms. The total forest area in Karnataka is 38, 28,430 hectares, out of this Reserved forest is 28, 68,996 hectares it means 74.93 per cent of the total forest area. Protected forest acquires 10.26 per cent of the total area. Un-classed forest is 13.66 percent, village forests and private land forest acquired less than one per cent of the total forests area in the Karnataka area.

Introduction:

Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) play an important role in both national and local economies. In some cases, the importance of these activities can be seen clearly from national statistics. In India, for example, more than 30 million people are employed in the non-timber forest product sector. In central Java in Indonesia, wood carving represents roughly 75 percent of handicraft exports. Products like rubber are critical to the economies of many countries. National statistics do not tell the whole story, however. Products that hardly figure in the statistics may nevertheless play an essential role in maintaining livelihoods at the local level. In Channapata, a town in Karnataka state in India, some 35 percent of employment comes from the lacquer work industry. In Sahelian villages such as Samkedji, Senegal, families survive the hungry season by selling kinkiliba, a kind of wild tea that grows on common lands around the village.

The initiation of new forest development strategy in India based in part on new-wood forest resources, has attracted international attention. It is now widely recognized that Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) provide substantial inputs to the livelihoods of forest dependent populations many of whom have limited non-agricultural income earning opportunities these socio-economic concerns together with a concern for forest loss and a decline in timber extraction potential have necessitated changes in India's forest management systems. India is beginning to experiment with forest management strategies already in place in parts of the Amazon region and which place livelihood and ecological considerations before revenue maximization concerns.

Conceptually NTFP (Non - Timber Forest Products) refers to all biological materials other than timber extracted from natural forests for human and animal use. It includes plant tissue used for fiber, building material, medicine, edible leaves, roots, flower, fruit, seed, nuts, honey, resin, glue, lac etc. and has both consumptive and exchange value. They have income potentials and provide employment opportunities. Prior to National Forest Policy (NFP), 1988, NTFPs were popularly known as Minor Forest Products

(MFP) that was centered around Kendu leaves (Bidi Patta) and few other products. Besides the economic value, the non-economic value of NTFP for the forest dwellers is more important since quite a good number of such products do not enter into the market and are primarily consumed at local level with a little value addition. NTFPs are a part of the socio-cultural life of tribal people who mainly maintain a symbolic relationship with the forest and forest based products. More particularly the reliance of tribal on NTFP becomes very high during uncertain agricultural yields for both food securities during seasonal shortages as well as for household medicine and income needs.

NTFPs can also play an important part in the sustainable management of forests. The value of timber depends on cutting trees. While this can be done in a sustainable fashion, often the fastest profits are obtained by clear-cutting which decimates a whole range of forest resources. In contrast, the exploitation of many NTFPs depends on keeping forests intact. In many places, if the full range of NTFPs is extracted and marketed, forests can provide much greater economic benefits than when they are used exclusively for timber. In cases where the value of NTFPs is well recognized, there is a powerful incentive to maintain standing forests.

Conceptual framework:

The conceptual framework on which this paper is anchored is the role of NTFPs in improving the livelihoods of the poor in forest fringe communities in Karnataka state. The principal premise of the paper is that NTFPs play an important role in meeting the needs of rural communities, especially in the areas of food, medicine, poverty reduction and livelihoods improvement. Non-timber forest products are integrated components of the forestry sector and have been widely recognized as potential resources for promoting sustainable livelihoods, conservation and capacitating development organizations. They play a crucial role in the livelihoods of rural people, especially for those dwelling in the forest and its vicinity. Besides medicinal plants the use of diverse groups of NTFPs is largely ignored by the community and development organizations. At present, medi-

nal plants are largely being over-exploited. It is therefore high time to explore and promote other NTFPs by not excluding medicinal plants. Sustainable collection, use and commercialization are the main drivers in the promotion of NTFPs for community development, poverty reduction and livelihood socio economic improvement.

The Objective and the Method of Research:

To gain insights into the functioning of NTFPs, the present study was carried out with the objective of assessing the contribution of NTFPs to income for ensuring food and livelihood in Karnataka state. In this direction the secondary data has been collected from various reports of NTFPs in Karnataka state. The literature has also been gathered from published articles, books and Government reports.

Importance of NTFPs

➤ NTFPs provide important products for local, national and international markets. These markets are growing rapidly and steadily (Wilkinson & Elivitch, 2000). Non timber resources have great potential for enhancing sustainable rural development and diversified economic growth, cultural endurance, and environmental health. Few NTFPs have low cash values and hence are used for consumption, rather than for sales. Where as rest NTFPs have highly commercial value. NTFPs are significant especially for poor, because they are available at low cost on common property lands. They are used by 3people because they have less alternative access to food and income. In a country like India, which has more than half of its population in rural areas and a large tribal population reliant on forest produce for their sustenance, NTFPs play a major role (Sawhney & Engel, 2003). At the same time, NTFPs collection should not hamper the environmental objectives such as conservation of forest and biological diversity.

➤ Non- Timber Forest Products play a vital role in livelihood of people in and around the forests (Quang, 2006). NTFPs comprise medicinal plants, dyes, mushrooms, fruits, resins, bark, roots and tubers, leaves, flowers, seeds, honey and so on (Anonymous, 1995). NTFPs (also called as "minor forest products" in national income accounting system) are sources of food and livelihood security for communities living in and around forests.

➤ In India over 50 million people are dependent on NTFPs for their subsistence and cash income. This provides 50 percent of household income for 20 to 30 per cent of rural population particularly for tribal. Potentially around 3000 species of forest products are found to be useful, but only 126 have developed marketability (Maithani 1994). Around 50 percent of forest revenues and 70 percent of forest based export income of the country comes from NTFPs

Karnataka: Its Forests

The State of Karnataka is located between 11 30' and 18 30' N latitudes and 74 10" and 78 30" E longitudes and covers an area of 1, 91,790 sq.kms. This accounts for 5.8 percent of the total geographic area of the country. It has 300 km. long coastline, which forms the western boundary. The state is bounded by Goa in the North-West, Maharashtra in the North, Andhra Pradesh in the East, Tamilnadu in the South and South-East and Kerala in the South-West.

Karnataka is endowed with some of the most magnificent forests in the country. From the majestic evergreen forests of the Western Ghats to the scrub jungles of the plains,

a wide variety of habitats exist with very typical flora and fauna, some of them endemic to the region. The Western Ghats, which covers about 60percent of forest area of Karnataka, is recognized as one of the 18-mega bio-diversity hotspots of the world. The total recorded forest area of the State is 38,284.30 Sq. K. M., constituting 20 percent of the geographical area. The Western Ghats forests are rich in fauna and floral diversity and are very valuable as both genetic and natural resources. Many plant and animal species are endemic to forests in the State. Several economically important species such as Sandalwood (*Santalum album*), Rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*), Teak (*Tectona grandis*), Honne (*Pterocarpus marsupium*), White Cedar (*Dysoxylon malabaricum*) and many non-timber and other medicinal plant species grow naturally in the forests of Karnataka. Karnataka has a protected area network of 5 national parks (2431.300sq.km.), and 21 wildlife sanctuaries (3887.827sq.km), covering nearly 16 percentage of its forest area. The forests of Karnataka are rich in biodiversity and support 25percentage of the elephant population and 10 percentage of the tiger population of the country, in addition to numerous species of mammals, birds, butterflies, amphibians, reptiles, flowering plants etc.

The conservation of forest wealth has become a major challenge in the whole of the country, including the state of Karnataka, because of ever-increasing pressures on already declining forest resources. As a result of burgeoning population and consequent landlessness, the pressure on the available land resources has been increasing day by day leading to encroachment of forestland, which has become a major threat to the conservation of forest and its resources. In many places, it has led to fragmentation of forest areas, honeycombing of forest areas, loss of corridor for movement of wild animals etc. Also in Karnataka there are valuable patches of private forests that require protection. Smuggling of timber and poaching of wild animals have now emerged as the most serious threats to the forest resources of the state. It has become difficult to manage these threats with the existing manpower, infrastructure and financial resources.

The table – 1 clearly explain that the total forest area acquire in Karnataka state. The total forest area in Karnataka is 38, 28,430 hectares, out of this Reserved forest is 28, 68,996 hectares it means 74.93 per cent of the total forest area. Protected forest acquires 10.26 per cent of the total area. Un-classed forest is 13.66 percent, village forests and private land forest acquired less than one per cent of the total forests area of the Karnataka area.

Table: 1 - The Forest Area in Karnataka State:

| Sl. No | Types of forests Area | (In Ha.) | % share of the total forest areas |
|--------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Reserved Forests | 28,68,996 | 74.93 |
| 2 | Protected Forests | 3,93,072 | 10.26 |
| 3 | Un-classed Forests | 5,23,100 | 13.66 |
| 4 | Village Forests | 12,420 | 0.324 |
| 5 | Forests in private lands | 30,842 | 0.805 |
| | Total Forests | 38,28,430 | 100 |

Note: HA – Hectare, % - Percentage

Source: Forest Department, Karnataka State.

NTFPs Policy in Karnataka State:

There is neither any policy on NTFP in the state or any laws that have direct consequences on NTFP- its collection, processing and marketing. Several legal documents have some rules regarding the extraction of certain NTFP such as the Karnataka Forest Manual; the Karnataka For-

est Privilege Rules, 1959; the Karnataka Forest Act, 1963; and the Karnataka Forest Rules, 1969. The Administration Report of Mysore Forest Department for 1955-56 reveals that except for lac propagated departmentally, no MFP was collected departmentally at that time. The private lessees used to buy 'bobs' from the Department for exploitation of forest produce. Tangadi(*Cassia auriculata*) and other MFP were sold in public auction and exploited by private agency.

Administration Report of 1970-71 says that except bamboo, there was no departmental collection of MFP. Gradually the Department started giving importance to MFPs. Bidi(beedi) leaves, tamarind, and shikakai, etc. are some of the major MFPs of the state, and the Karnataka State Forest Development Corporation supplies bamboo to the industries. The Annual Report of 1980-81 mentions that cane is not so abundant, and the Department started supply of cane to industries since 1975-76. The departmental supply was to ensure sustainability of the produce. Export of cane was banned except for supply of small quantity to Sports Goods Export Promotion Council. Industries were allotted forest areas for collection of Bade grass, Rosa grass, and Elephant grass on lease basis. However, bamboo artisans like medars used to enjoy certain concessions on the price of bamboo.

The said Report of 1980-81 further mentions that a tribal sub-plan was being implemented in certain districts of Mysore, Shimoga, and Madikari Circles for the welfare of tribals; and under this programme, the following activities were proposed:

- raising MFP plantation(nursery)
- maintenance of fruit orchards
- plantation for tassar silk cultivation(nursery)
- raising of fruit yielding species(etc.).

The Annual Report of 1992-93 said, NTFP (MFP) have become a major source of revenue. Raising of trees yielding of NTFP and plant products of medicinal value improving the forest productivity on a sustained basis was being carried out under the centrally sponsored scheme of raising plantations of MFP & medicinal plants.55 NTFP Policy Regime after FRA:

Conclusion:

The initiation of new forest development strategy in India based in part on new-wood forest resources, has attracted international. It is now widely recognized that Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). Karnataka is endowed with some of the most magnificent forests in the country. From the majestic evergreen forests of the Western Ghats to the scrub jungles of the plains, a wide variety of habitats exist with very typical flora and fauna, some of them endemic to the region. The Western Ghats, which covers about 60percent of forest area of Karnataka, is recognized as one of the 18-mega bio-diversity hotspots of the world. The forests of Karnataka are rich in biodiversity and support 25percentage of the elephant population and 10 percentage of the tiger population of the country, in addition to numerous species of mammals, birds, butterflies, amphibians, reptiles, flowering plants etc.

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