



NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS

Towards the livelihood of forest dependent communities

--Role of Government for alternative employment

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Abstract

Odisha is a rich source of forest produce but the Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) has been given a mere importance by the people and the government. Most of the tribes of rural areas basically depend on NTFPs for their livelihood and it acts as a backbone to them. Women from different tribes in Odisha are mostly involved in NTFPs collection and marketing, generating a huge income. Many major and minor NTFPs are collected in Odisha from various parts of forest Tendu leaf, Mahua Flowers and Tamarind Fruit. This paper outlines the availability of non-timber forest produce in Odisha, their scope and importance for tribal people. It also includes a brief idea and challenges which are faced by the rural people during the collection, processing and marketing of NTFPs and some strategy and policies to overcome the issues and challenges of overexploitation of forest produce, and especially for those who depended on NTFPs banned by the governments, the state & central governments should play them and show them their livelihood.

Key words: NTFPs, Economic, Tribal Population, Marketing

Introduction

Forest resources are one of the most important economic resources for the rural population in India, in general, and for the rural tribal population, in particular. It is interesting to note that for many past decades, the forest resources have always been evaluated in terms of timber. However, the rural tribal people do not depend only on timber extraction from forests, in every respect, for their livelihood; but the livelihood of these people also depend upon the extraction of a large variety of other forest products, collectively known as the Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFPs).

NTFPs are known to provide essential food and nutrition, fodder, medicine, fuel, construction materials and non-agricultural income, particularly, during the food deficit period of agricultural cycle and other seasonal fluctuations.

Due to rapid deforestation and over-exploitation of forest resources, NTFPs are at a risk in many areas thereby posing a threat to their livelihood during the lean period.

Profile of the study area

- Orissa, located in eastern India, is a forest-rich state with forest cover over 39.3% of its geographical area, whereas Rayagada district cover over 44.3% of its area (FSI, 2020). It is also among the poorest states with 32.59% percent of the population living below the poverty line (RBI,2020) .

- It is estimated that almost half the population of the state is dependent on forests whereas 37% of them depend on NTFPs. Studies conducted by RCDC and other organizations indicate that as much as 30-40% of the income of people in forest-fringe villages comes from NTFPs

Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) constitute an important source of livelihood for millions of people from forest fringe communities across the world. In India, NTFPs are associated with socio-economic and cultural life of forest dependent communities inhabiting in wide ecological and geo-climatic conditions throughout the country.

Problem statement

Tribal people living in hilly forest areas depend on non-timer forest products for their livelihood. In Rayagada, 50 % of the income of the triable in Rayagada District comes from the collection of non-timber forest products Inspire of its importance, their commercial value is low. One of the difficulties for small-scale collectors who seek to commercialize NTFPs is that often the markets for these products are relatively complex compared to those for timber and traditional agricultural goods. Prices for NTFPs vary across different locations as well as over time. In addition, buyers also impose different quality control standards. Collectors are frequently rural people who are often poor or landless. And also Government restrictions to collect on Tendu leaf, Mahua flower. All these factors contribute to complexity of NTFP markets leading to the problem of food insecurity by influencing the household income of the people dependent on it. Poor tribal colonies in the study region mainly depend on NTFPs for their livelihood and earn substantial income from these products. This study tries to fulfil this gap by analysing the contribution of NTFP towards food and livelihood security.

Objectives

The study is undertaken with the following objectives kept in mind:

1. To study the distribution of Tendu leaf, Mahua flower and Tamarind fruit as NTFPs in Rayagada District.
2. To study the contribution of these NTFPs on the livelihood of the people in Rayagada District

NTFPs AND LIVELIHOOD- The Concept

The purpose of the present study is to bring out the significant role that the Non-Timber Forest Products play towards the livelihood, employment and economic stability of the people in villages. the Non-Timber Forest

Products (Tendu leaf, Mahua Flowers and Tamarind Fruit) Researcher is selected for this study. NTFPs have become increasingly recognized to support resilience and livelihood enhancement of rural communities in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere in developed as well as developing countries (Campbell and Luckert, 2002; Mukul et al., 2010; Kar and Jacobson, 2012; Cavendish, 2000). A livelihood is sustainable, resources, and activities necessary to provide the livelihood (DFID, 1999), both material and immaterial social activities and resources. Traditionally and fundamentally MAPs and NTFPs are correlated with rural peoples' livelihoods. NTFPs have the potential to play a vital role in reducing seasonal and long-term malnutrition and food insecurity. Local people have indigenous knowledge of the available forest resources used for their food security in combination with agricultural production. Local people sometimes use these sources for income generation, which provides an opportunity for alternative livelihood options as well (IUCN, 2001).

Categories and uses of NTFPs

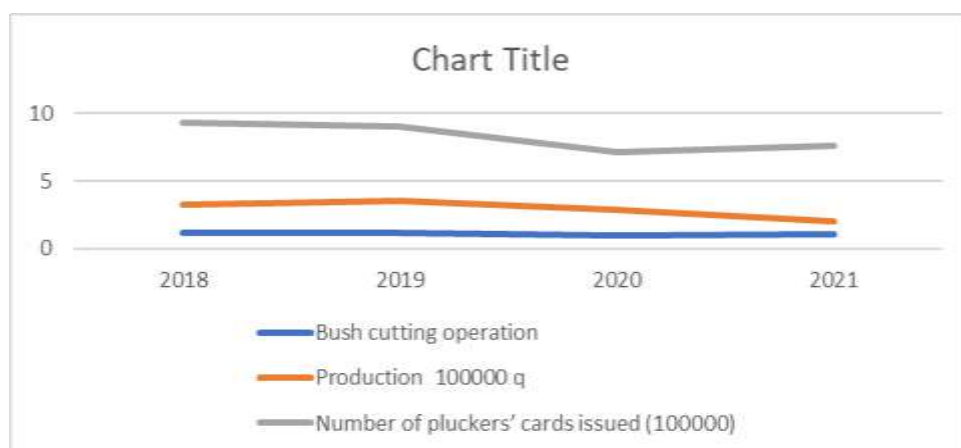
The NTFPs use is characterized by a diversity of institutional arrangements regarding access to the resources and markets at both local and national level. There is, however, great variation in the extent to which forest products are used from area to area and even between households within a community.

Tendu leaf

- Tendu leaf is an important NTFP in the state of Odisha and provides seasonal employment to millions of tendu leaf collectors every year. The trade in tendu leaves has been nationalized in the state, which means that only state government or its authorized agents can procure these leaves from the collectors or growers.
- Tendu leaf is an important NTFP in the state of Odisha and provides seasonal employment to millions of tendu leaf collectors every year.
- Trend in bush cutting, production, and number of tendu leaf collectors in Orissa

Year	Bush cutting operation	Production 100000 q*	Number of pluckers' cards issued (100000)
2018	1.16	3.27	9.33
2019	1.13	3.56	9.06
2020	1.00	2.841	7.13
2021	1.04	2.020	7.57

(Source: PCCF Office, Bhubaneswar) * q: (quintal)



According to the above data Gradually decreasing the bush cutting operations means production is decrease, because majorly deforestation is effect to the dependents on forest. And also, nearby state (Aandhra Preadesh) is banned the tendu leaf. Tendu leaf provide seasonal employment to millions of people majorly who is living in triable area and nearest of triable areas. But the state Government of AP encourage the tobacco cultivation.

Mahua Flowers

Mahua has a special status among NTFPs as its flowers are used to brew country liquor. Naturally fallen flowers are collected in large numbers during the season (generally March to May). One major issue related to mahua flower collection is the use of fire. Some collectors burn the forest floor under mahua trees to facilitate flower collection. the value of labour input for collecting one kilogram of mahua flower is Rs 7.15. However, GCC procures it at only Rs 6 per kilogram. State Government and Central Government encourage the Mahua flowers collecting workers and also government purchase directly and use the flowers for alcohol preparation. Because Governments are selling alcohol to every village with very high price, so why not government think about Mahua flowers and dependents workers on Mahua flowers. It is the good scope to provide employment to Mahua flower collet workers.

Tamarind Fruit

India is the world's largest producer of tamarind, which is collected from trees growing on all types of lands – forest, common, and private. Tamarind has a huge domestic and overseas market and commands a good price from the end-consumers.

However, primary producers and collectors get very low prices and bulk of the value is captured by the middlemen. Many tamarind collectors in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh are forced to sell tamarind at very low rates to petty traders.

Some traders barter tamarind with low value items resulting in a major loss for the collectors. Many collectors also have credit linkages with the traders and use tamarind to clear their dues. In this arrangement too, the collectors end up getting a raw deal as the interest rates are usually quite high.

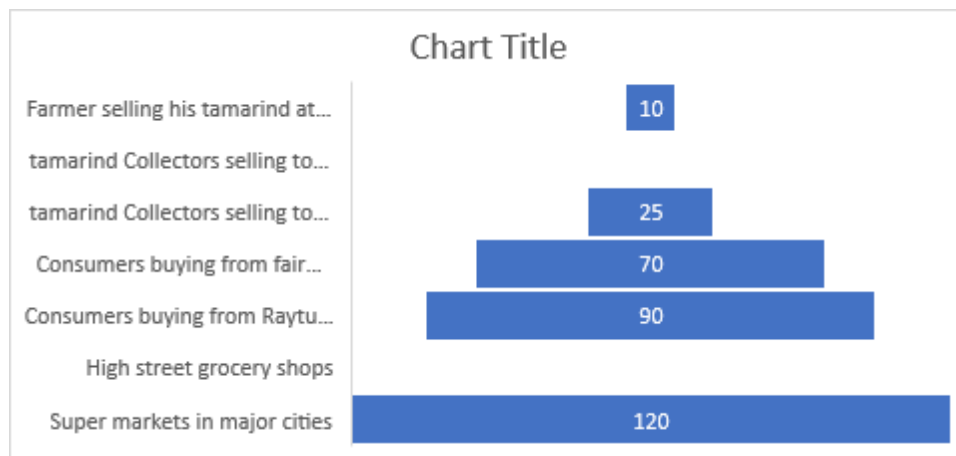
Even in Andhra Pradesh, where GCC procures tamarind from the collectors at specified rates, the situation is no better. The prices prevalent at different points in the tamarind marketing chain in Andhra Pradesh illustrate the huge difference between the price paid by the end-consumers and the price obtained by the primary producers or collectors.

Prices prevalent at different points in the marketing chain of tamarind:

Sale / purchase point	Rs per Kg
Farmer selling his tamarind at flowering stage	10
tamarind Collectors selling to GCC (seeded, improperly graded, and black in colour)	16-18

tamarind Collectors selling to private traders (seeded, graded/ processed, and dried)	25
Consumers buying from fair price shops	70
Consumers buying from Raytu Bazar	90
High street grocery shops	90-100
Super markets in major cities	120

(Source: Eenadu newspaper)



According to the above table: primary producers and Tamarind collectors get very low prices and bulk of the value is captured by the middlemen. Many tamarind collectors in Orissa are forced to sell tamarind at very low rates to petty traders.

TRIFED was established in August 1987 under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984 by the Government of India as a National level Cooperative body under the administrative control of the then Ministry of Welfare of India, with the basic mandate of bringing about socio-economic development of tribals of the country by institutionalizing the trade of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) & Surplus Agricultural Produce (SAP) collected/ cultivated by them. It is not working properly that is also biggest problem to who depend on Tamarind collectors. But tribal societies are not working properly, that why tamarind market prices raising from bottom to top range but tribals are not getting any benefit.

Marketing system of NTFPs

The tribals have to sell their material as they need the money to buy weekly supplies. Yet most forest people have poor access to markets, insufficient capital to invest in improving their livelihoods and little or no bargaining power when selling their products in markets. Due to lack of direct access to markets, they depend on intermediaries to sell their products, reducing their share of the income. There were at least four levels of intermediaries between the collectors/gatherers and processing Centre.

Investment in locally controlled forestry requires certain preconditions. With greater information, effective consultations with stakeholders and strategic approaches to policy-making, NTFP laws and policies can promote ecological sustainability, equity in trade and improved rural livelihoods. To keep employment through NTFPs certain measures to be taken, as this is an alternative employment especially during lean agricultural season.

Conclusion

NTFPs' contribution to revenue varies across environmental settings, seasons, and income levels. They contribute to improving nutrition as part of the family diet or as a means of achieving home food security. Indigenous people sometimes use these resources to generate income, which allows for alternative livelihood options, and the exploitation of middlemen in the tamarind fruit market is high. Governments should therefore implement new regulations in the tamarind market. Government ban on mahua flowers is good but Governments are selling liquor to every village at high prices. It would be desirable for governments to take a golden step to help those who depend on NTFPs with the same passion.

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