Non-wood forest products (NWFPs) are goods of biological origin other than wood, derived from forests, other wooded land and trees outside forests. NWFPs and similar terms such as “minor”, “secondary” and “non-timber” forest products (NTFPs) have emerged as umbrella expressions for the vast array of both animal and plant products other than wood derived from forests or forest tree species.

Dear readers,

Welcome to our first issue for 2014, which will focus on the institutional dimensions of NWFPs and the degree to which legal and institutional frameworks on NWFPs should be improved. In our special feature, Sarah A. Laird, Rachel P. Wynberg and Rebecca J. McLain, experts in wild product governance, look at the policy environment surrounding NWFPs. In an interview with Manuel Guariguata from CIFOR, we look at regulations governing Brazil nut harvesting in the Peruvian Amazon. Elsewhere, two FAO projects in Central Africa are (1) exploring Participatory Wildlife Management (PWM) for sustainably using wildlife resources and (2) providing technical support to bolster legal, institutional and organizational frameworks on NWFPs in the region. Further north, the EU and FAO are partnering up to look at European policies and legislation on NWFPs. Finally, in his article on plant extractivism, Brazilian agricultural economist Alfredo Homma urges decision makers to develop policies that support the domestication of wild plants in Amazonia.

Readers are reminded to send contributions (including recent papers, projects, workshops, articles, etc.) to: non-wood-news@fao.org

HIGHLIGHTS

Sustaining & Enhancing Forests Through Traditional Resource Management

Wild Product Governance

Central African Guidelines on NTFPs (FR)

SPECIAL FEATURE

Governance of NTFPs: ensuring effective laws and policies in practice, Sarah A. Laird, Rachel P. Wynberg & Rebecca J. McLain

Non-timber forest products play a significant role in livelihoods around the world, providing critical subsistence and trade goods for forest and other communities. However, in most countries the governance of this important but broad category of products has been ineffective or counter- productive to the objectives of sustainability and livelihood improvement. The problem begins with the definition of species and products covered by regulations, and continues to encompass an absence of strategies, clarity of objectives, poorly formulated laws, and flawed implementation.

In most countries, a strategic approach to regulating the NTFP sector is uncommon. The tendency is for NTFP laws to be drafted in response to a real or perceived crisis or opportunity. These include an over-harvesting crisis, particularly when a species moves from local trade and subsistence to large-scale commercial trade. For example, when the southern African species moved into international markets in 2001, a surge in demand for raw material required governments to respond rapidly by introducing stringent permitting procedures, and in some cases prohibiting wild harvesting. When cultivated material became more widely available a few years later, pressure on wild populations was reduced and governments loosened regulations.

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INTERVIEW

Dr. Manuel R. Guariguata, CIFOR, on Brazil nut harvesting in the Peruvian Amazon

“Formalization does not necessarily mean good management and in the context of timber and Brazil nut harvesting, for
**REGIONAL DISPATCHES**

To Regulate or Not to Regulate: The Case of Bushmeat Use in Central Africa

The idea of granting local and indigenous peoples rights to control and manage the forests they live in is not new and is arguably time-honored practice known as “Participatory Wildlife Management” (PWM), “Community Based Natural Resource Management” (CBNRM) or “Participatory Biodiversity Conservation” (PBC), the concepts hearken back to the 1990s at least, steadily gaining momentum in recent years viable strategies for both sustainably using wildlife resources for food security and economic development.

Against this backdrop, an FAO Global Environment Facility (GEF) project in the Congo Basin has set out to test and implement a new approach to bushmeat management through PWM. The project, which kicked off in 2012, is based on the premise that wildlife and associated bushmeat use is best regulated by local communities in order to ensure sustainable long-term use.

In 2005, at the request of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), FAO began offering technical support to the regional institution to promote sustainable management of non-protected wildlife resources. From this premise, FAO, as one of 20 partners working to implement the European Union’s EU Star Tree Project (http://star-tree.eu/) to identify and analyze existing NWFP-related policies and legislation within the EU at varying scales (EU, Member States, regions), has argued that NWFPs and enhance their contribution to food security, with financial assistance from Germany.

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Ousseynou Ndoye is the Regional Project Coordinator for FAO and Paul Vantomme is a Senior Forestry Officer at FAO.

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**Star Tree Project Looks at European Policies and Legislation on NWFPs**

Recent studies have demonstrated that legislation, property regimes, policy goals and financial instruments influence production, marketing, use and innovation in the NWFP sector can arguably be positively affected by an appropriate legal framework. On this premise, FAO, as one of 20 partners working to implement the European Union’s EU Star Tree Project (https://star-tree.eu) to identify and analyze existing NWFP-related policies and legislation within the EU at varying scales (EU, Member States, regions), has argued that NWFPs and enhance their contribution to food security, with financial assistance from Germany.

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**FAO Continues long-standing support to Central African countries to design and introduce long-term policies and legislation for sustainable use of NWFPs**

**Read more**

**Plant Extractivism in Amazonia: Where are we headed?**

Alfredo Homma is an agricultural economist and researcher at Embrapa Amazonia Oriental, Belém, Para, Brazil

“There is a misconception that all non-wood forest products are sustainable. This is a big mistake because not all economic extraction ensures biologic sustainability.”

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Last year marked 25 years since the murder of the trade union leader Chico Mendes (1944-1988), a global icon associated with the creation of extractivism in the Amazon. Extractivism has a long history, with the market for small or large stocks in the wild. When the market starts to grow, the extractive sector is unable to support the growth in demand levels, emergence of economic alternatives, development of synthetic substitutes, etc.

It was because of the limitation of production to meet consumption that mankind began, ten thousand years ago, the process of domestication of plants and hundreds of animals in the world which have been domesticated. We simply could not be feeding over 7 billion people by simply collecting product from nature.

The English were the first to realize that the world could not depend on the rubber collected in the wild, sending, in 1876, 70 thousand rubber tree seeds from the Amazon to Southeast Asia. When they began to commercialize rubber from Southeast Asia, the Amazon entered into a downward economic, social and political spiral because investments were made only in the collection of extractive rubber. There was great excitement around the years of 1876 when the rubber industry was at its peak, but its sustainability was doubted.

It is an illusion to think that we will be able to survive exclusively by collecting forest products. We must give attention to the areas that have been clearest and the size of Spain or more than twice the size of Germany. To keep our forests intact, we must look at the areas already deforested and learn from expert knowledge on biodiversity, medicinal plants, wood, etc.). Governments should therefore lead the way to also develop policies that support the domestication of palm oil, more readily available, for example, local people can explore domestication to vary their livelihood options.

There is a misconception that all non-wood forest products are sustainable. This is a big mistake because not all economic extraction ensures biologic sustainability.

Plant extractivism was very important in the past, continues to be in the present, but we need to think ahead, to democratize the products of Amazonian biodiversity. Each forest product inherently requires distinct practices, rules and regulations. Plant extractivism was very important in the past, continues to be in the present, but we need to think ahead, to democratize the products of Amazonian biodiversity. Each forest product inherently requires distinct practices, rules and regulations.

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**PRODUCT WATCH**