

Research Paper

Opinions and Problems Regarding Various Aspects of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP): A Study on NTFP Collectors of Shivalik Range of Jammu Region

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ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out in Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir State during the year 2017-2019. In this study, three forest ranges namely; Basantgarh, Dudu and Bani ranges were selected purposively because maximum Non Timber Forest Product (NTFP) activities were being carried under these ranges. From each forest range 50 NTFP collectors were selected through snowball sampling technique. In this way total sample of 150 collectors were selected as ultimate sampling units. And in comparison to this a matching sample of 150 non- collectors were also selected through random sampling procedure. The data was collected through personal interview with the help of interview schedule. The findings of this study reveal problems faced by the respondents in collection and marketing of NTFPs, lack of markets for NTFPs was the main constraint ranked first by the collectors in the study area followed by no proper weighting of material, harmful wild weeds and attack of wild animals. To overcome the challenges they have faced during collection and marketing of NTFPs, majority of the collectors (90%) suggested that training programme should be organized for skill development and processing units in villages, followed by license for collection (86.67%), proper market channels (83.33%) and the government should set the selling prices for various NTFPs (70%).

HIGHLIGHTS

- All collectors cited the readily available NTFPs as the primary reason for their activity, followed by the need for food, the need for a source of income, and the activity's profitability.
- Most people who didn't participate in the NTFP collection reported the following as the main reasons why they didn't.
- Collectors have reported multiple barriers or constraints that make NTFP collection more difficult.

Keywords: NTFPs, collection, marketing, problems, coping mechanisms

In 1989, De Beer and MacDermott came up with the term non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Products of biological origin other than wood derived from forests, other wooded lands, and trees outside forests; as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1999. You may also hear it referred to as minor forest produce (MFP) or non-wood forest produce (NWFP). Historically known as Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), only 20% of its landmass is forested (20,230 sq km).

Supposedly, it covers 12,000 sq km in Jammu, 8,128 sq km in Kashmir, and 36 sq km in Ladakh (DES, 2013-14). It is no exaggeration to say that J&K's forests are home to some of the world's most exotic and medicinal plant species. The state encompasses

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a wide range of climatic zones suitable for different types of agriculture, from the subtropical to the intermediate to the temperate. Some of the most important NTFP-containing trees are the *Acacia Catechu*, *Acacia nilotica*, *Aegle marmelos*, *Carissa spinarum*, *Cordia dichotoma*, *Ficus palmate*, *Flacourtia indica*, *Ficus roxburghii*, *Ziziphus xylopyrus*, and *Ziziphus nummularia* that are found growing wild in the subtropical region. From an economic point of view, NTFP trees such as *Pinus roxburghii*, *olive*, *Pyrus pashia Buch*, etc., and *Cedrus deodara*, *Juglans regia*, *Pinus gerardiana*, etc., are extremely important in the temperate zone (Slathia and Paul, 2012).

J&K's peasants rely heavily on wage labour and agriculture for their livelihoods. However, the money generated by agriculture is not sufficient to ensure their long-term survival because of the prevalence of mono-cropping and rainfed agriculture. Therefore, they rely on animal husbandry, forest produce (NTFPs), and non-agricultural activities such as business, government, and private jobs because agriculture is not a viable source of income for them. One of these alternative sources of income is NTFPs, which play an essential role in ensuring their long-term survival by providing a source of income and employment. *Aloe vera* (Aloe), *Berberis lyceum* (Rasount), *Dioscorea deltoidea* (Kins), *Morchella esculenta L.* (Guchhi), *Saussuria costus* (Kuth), *Viola canescence* (Bunafsha), wild apricot, etc. are all examples of useful NTFPs found in J&K.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in the Jammu region. The forest area of the Jammu division is divided into forest circles, forest divisions, forest ranges, forest blocks and forest beats. A multistage sampling plan was followed for the drawl of ultimate sampling units. Jammu region is divided into three forest circles namely the East circle, West circle and Chenab circle. The East circle was purposively selected as it covers all three agro-climatic zones namely Subtropical, Intermediate and Temperate, thus it represents the whole Jammu division. East forest circle comprises seven forest divisions. Out of these seven forest divisions; Basholi, Ramnagar and Udampur were selected by employing a random selection procedure without replacement. A meeting was conducted with the forest officials of each selected forest division and they were

asked to apparently rank the forest ranges with the maximum NTFP collection activities taking place. Thus from each randomly selected forest division, one forest range having maximum NTFP availability was selected. For the selection of forest blocks cyclic sampling method was followed. Again forest officials of each selected forest range, were asked to rank the forest blocks where the maximum NTFP collection activities are taking place, apparently. Wherever the required number of ultimate sampling units was not available, the second-ranked forest block was selected. Forest beats were also selected by the cyclic sampling method. Forest officials of each selected forest block, were asked to rank the forest beats where the maximum NTFP collection activities are taking place, apparently. Wherever the required number of ultimate sampling units was unavailable, the second-ranked forest beat was selected.

The collectors and non-collectors were the ultimate sampling units. Since there was no data on the collector available, therefore, the first collector was contacted with the help of available resource persons in beat. The other respondents were contacted on the basis of information so provided by the first respondent. Hence, all the available collectors were contacted with a snowball sampling procedure, from each selected beat to meet the sample size of 50 collectors. Wherever the required sample from the firstly selected beat was not available the second-ranked beat was taken to complete the sample of 50 collectors. A similar procedure of selecting collectors was employed for each selected beat. In this way a total sample of 150 collectors were selected as ultimate sampling units. To have the control group, of non-collectors, a similar number of a matching group of 150 non-collectors, were also selected. A similar procedure of selecting collectors and non-collectors was employed for each selected beat.

Simple ranking technique was applied to measure the problems faced by the respondents in collection, storage, processing and marketing of NTFPs. Each respondent was asked to mention his problems. The response was calculated and presented on the basis of frequency and percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One hundred percent of respondents listed the convenience of readily available NTFPs as the

primary motivation for their collection efforts. Almost all respondents (95.33%) said they were able to afford their basic food needs thanks to their reported source of income, and the majority (88.00%) said their business was profitable (table 1). One hundred percent of respondents listed the convenience of readily available NTFPs as a major factor in their decision to collect this data. Nearly all respondents (95.33%) said they were able to afford their basic food needs with their current income, and 88.00% said their business was profitable (table 1).

Table 1: Reasons for the collection of NTFPs

Parameter	Collectors (n= 150)
Source of income	143 (95.33)
Profitable activity	132 (88.00)
To meet food requirement	140 (93.33)
Available nearby	150 (100.00)

Source: Field survey data. The figure in parentheses represents the percentage.

Table 2 shows that 99 percent of NTFP gatherers entered the forest without permission and only 1 percent of them had personal relationships with forest service employees. Many collectors also claim that the forest department did not assist them in any way during the NTFPs' collection, processing, or marketing phases. All of the collectors said that the forest department would punish them severely if they were caught illegally harvesting NTFPs. Even the forest service failed to offer any health care or training for NTFP collection. Overall, it was determined that all sample collectors were unhappy with how the forest department assisted locals. According to the research of Shivaprasad, T.M. (2016).

Table 2: Opinion of NTFP collectors towards Forest Department

Parameter	Collectors (n= 150)
How do you access to forest for NTFP collection?	
Social Relation	1 (0.67)
Free to go	149 (99.33)
Is there any help from forest department in?	
Collection?	0
Processing?	0

Marketing?	0
What are the restrictions imposed by forest department?	
Fine	150 (100.00)
Imprisonment	150 (100.00)
Is there any educational measures taken by forest department	0
Is there any medical facilities provided by forest department	0
Are you satisfied with the role of forest department in helping local community for collection and marketing of NTFP?	0
What are the facilities required by the forest department?	
License	150 (100.00)
Training	80 (53.33)
Market linkage	115 (76.67)
Value addition units	105 (70.00)

Source: Field survey data. The figure in parentheses represents the percentage.

Table 2 shows that all collectors wanted some sort of assistance from the forest service, specifically a license, market linkage (76.67%), value addition units (70.00%), and training (53.33%).

Table 3 shows that 82% of collectors found a buyer through a fellow seller, while 18% found a buyer directly. Only 2% of collectors were aware of the true value of NTFPs on the market. Overall, 57.33% of collectors hold off on selling their NTFP until prices rise. While the contractors did not provide any amenities to the collectors, nearly all of them (99.33%) believed that the price contractors offered for NTFP were fairer than that offered by private traders or the open market. Even though 82% of collectors were happy with the overall system, only 18% were happy with the contractors' weighing system. More than seventy-eight percent (78.00%) of those who collect NTFPs believe it is important for future generations to do the same. Tassou, M. 2017, found very similar results.

Table 3: Opinion of NTFP collectors towards NTFP collection activities

Parameter	Collectors (n= 150)
How do you identify of potential buyer	
Personal contact	27 (18.00)
Fellow seller	123 (82.00)
Any other	0

Do you have knowledge about actual sale price of NTFPs?	3 (2.00)
Do you wait for price hike of NTFP for selling?	86 (57.33)
Do you get good price after wait for price hike?	41 (27.33)
Is there any facilities provided by contractors?	0
Do you feel that contractors are providing a reasonable price for NTFP than the private traders/ open market?	148 (98.67)
Are you satisfy with the weighing system done by contractors?	27 (18.00)
Do you want future generation to continue collecting NTFPs?	117 (78.00)

Source: Field survey data. The figure in parentheses represents the percentage.

The analysis of the various reasons for not adopting the NTFP collection is presented in table 4, which reveals that non-engagement in the collection of NTFPs' because of the ban on the collection of NTFPs was the main reason ranked Ist by non-collectors. This was followed by non availability of time for collection (II ranks), risk of attack by wild animals (III ranks), more involvement in business activities (IV ranks), no knowledge regarding NTFPs (IV ranks), and non availability of market for selling NTFP (V ranks), working in a government department (VI ranks), not profitable (VII ranks), no need (VIII ranks) and because of more age (IX ranks).

Table 4: Reasons for not collection of NTFPs by non-collectors

Parameter*	Collectors (n= 150)	Rank
Having no time	89 (59.33)	II
More involved in business activities	22 (14.67)	IV
Non availability of market for selling NTFPs	16 (10.67)	V
Ban on collection of NTFPs	100 (66.67)	I
No knowledge regarding NTFPs	22 (14.67)	IV
More age	8 (5.33)	IX
Working in government department	15 (10)	VI
No need	10 (6.67)	VIII
Not profitable	14 (9.33)	VII
Risk of attack of wild animals	25 (16.67)	III

*Multiple responses.

The figure in parentheses represents the percentage.

The production of every commodity, in any industry, is inevitably hampered by many kinds of limitations. Collectors of NTFPs reported a similar series of limitations in this study. Several restrictions were mentioned by NTFP collectors in the East forest circle in the Jammu region. Priorities from responses were used to prioritize the various limitations, as described in the technique. Study participants regarded a lack of NTFP markets as the primary limitation they encountered. Comparable findings are also found in the work of Raufu, et al. (2012) and Nedanovska (2012). The research area is home to two distinct NTFP marketing strategies. In addition to selling their goods to the contractors' representatives, they are also selling their goods at the local businesses in the hamlet. Farmers' markets in the village then sell the goods to construction companies. These marketplaces provide a wide variety of shops and vendors selling a wide range of goods and services. They were not authorized to collect in any way. These markets do not have any sort of oversight. Yet, many collectors in the research region sell their goods to the agents of contractors immediately after collecting due to a lack of funds. These agents travel to the communities on a seasonal basis to collect forest goods when they become available. This chain of middlemen would then sell the goods to the primary licensing contractors. The NTFP collectors said the weighing system was the biggest issue in these sales. In a survey of NTFP collectors, 82% said that middlemen never properly weighed their goods, and prices often varied. These flaws in the distribution of goods are a direct result of the markets being uncontrolled. The intermediaries have a stranglehold on the market. The findings of Azeez and Falade (2012) are consistent with this. Moreover, NTFP collectors reported using a wide variety of resources to learn market prices. Collaborators, dealers, peddlers, farmers' markets, and so on all played crucial roles. Yet, the collectors frequently reported being misled, making these sources unreliable. In light of the foregoing, it is proposed that there be supervised marketplaces for the sale of NTFPs, complete with a weighing system and equity counters to disseminate price data. In addition to print and radio, television can help get the word out about the market.

Other factors cited by collectors as impediments to NTFP collection include the presence of harmful

Table 5: Problems faced by the collectors

Particulars*	Collectors (n=150)	Rank
Existence of bad weather (Heavy and continuous rainfall and blockage of road by the over flow of the rain water etc)	110 (73.33)	IV
Attack of wild animals	120 (80.00)	III
Harmful wild weeds	120 (80.00)	III
Sloppy and slippery terrains	103 (68.67)	VI
No proper weighting of material	123 (82.00)	II
Fluctuation in sale price	108 (72.00)	V
Cloths torn	85 (56.67)	VII
Material get stolen	75 (50.00)	VIII
Less awareness about collection	5 (3.33)	IX
Lack of markets for NTFPs	135 (90.00)	I

*Multiple responses; The figure in parentheses represents the percentage.

Table 6: Suggestions given by NTFP collectors to overcome problems

Particulars*	Collectors (n=150)
License for collection	130 (86.67)
Proper market channels	125 (83.33)
A training programme for skill development in the collection, processing, and selling of NTFPs should be organized.	135 (90.00)
The government should set the selling prices for various NTFPs.	105 (70.00)
Processing units in villages	135 (90.00)
Forest rules and laws for NTFP collecting should be flexible.	110 (73.33)

*Multiple responses; The figure in parentheses represents the percentage.

wild weeds and the attack of wild animals, the presence of bad weather, the fluctuation in the sale price, the sloppiness and slipperiness of the terrain, the tearing and stealing of clothing and other materials, and a general lack of awareness about the importance of NTFP collection. The results are consistent with those found by other researchers, including Alibaba *et al.* (2000), Ahenkan and Bloon (2010), Singh *et al.* (2010), Raufu *et al.* (2012), and Gupta (2015).

There were many proposals made by collectors to address issues with NTFP collection and distribution. It shows that most collectors think training programmes should be organized to help people acquire new abilities related to the collection, processing, and marketing of NTFPs and processing units in rural areas, and that the government ought to establish standard distribution channels and selling prices for various NTFPs. The majority of respondents agreed that a license for NTFPs collection was needed. Similar conclusions were reached by Singh (2004), Tejaswi (2008), Acharya (2013), and Gupta (2015).

CONCLUSION

For long-term survival, peasants in forest peripheries rely significantly on non-timber forest products. Food, nourishment, medicine, and income can all be derived from this. Unfortunately, the presence of poor weather greatly disrupts the collection and marketing of NTFPs due to a variety of challenges, including an ineffective weighing system, a low and changing market price, and a lack of a developed market. Due to inadequate market mechanisms, collectors were not receiving fair compensation for their NTFPs. That meant less money from NTFP sales. In addition, the government needs to take action to resolve the problems being experienced by the collectors. In this light, the government's problem-solving processes should include suggestions from respondents for addressing these challenges.

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