

Appendix 5.27

Popular Article

Title: Identifying the 'Winners & Losers' in the commercialisation of non-timber forest products (NTFPs)

Author: O'Regan, D.P.

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1. Identifying the 'Winners & Losers' in the commercialisation of non-timber forest products (NTFPs)

From: Dermot O'Regan [dpo@ceh.ac.uk]

The commercialisation of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) has an impact on many groups of people, from poor farmers to small-scale entrepreneurs, and on the resource base.

Examining different NTFP market chains can help to identify suitable development paths, so that commercial returns are not achieved at the expense of ecological sustainability and other social, cultural and environmental benefits.

Over the past three years, our group at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) Wallingford has been leading an international multi-disciplinary team examining the distribution, use and marketing of NTFPs from two species, marula (*Sclerocarya birrea*) in South Africa and Namibia, and crabwood (*Carapa guianensis*) in Guyana, to assess the economic and ecological impacts of their commercialisation on the forest resource base and people's livelihoods.

Our research has shown that NTFP use can provide important income for poorer households, especially for women, diversify their livelihood options, and at the same time lead to improved management and conservation of the resource. We have also highlighted the fact that the potential economic benefits of NTFP commercialisation must be weighed against social, cultural and ecological costs that may arise, particularly when products become the focus of large-scale enterprise.

The marula tree and its fruit are well known across southern Africa, thanks to its widespread distribution, its common use amongst rural communities (especially for brewing beer), and its popularisation through the advertising efforts of the producers of Amarula Cream liqueur. The marula tree has many uses and it is an example of an NTFP with considerable commercialisation potential. Its bark provides medicine, its wood is used for carving, its fruits for the preparation of juice, beer and jams, and its kernels provide a wholesome snack and high quality oil.

Crabwood is a tree found across Amazonia and Central America and is a much sought-after hardwood. But the benefits of the oil derived from its

seeds are also known throughout the region. In Guyana, crabwood oil is a highly prized household item among Amerindian peoples having multiple uses, especially for the treatment of common ailments. Its other properties and uses have important potential, and have been examined so that appropriate management regimes can be developed.

The 'Winners & Losers' project team includes specialists in environmental economics, ecology, natural resource management, community development, marketing, and intellectual property rights. We set out to identify the 'winners' and 'losers' in forest product commercialisation to help establish methods of sustainable harvest of resources, benefit local producers, and resolve conflicts. This knowledge can help forest-dependant communities all over the world to profit from their natural resources in an equitable and sustainable way. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) is funding the research as part of their Forestry Research Programme, and will use the results to inform local communities as well as national and international forest policies.

The research has shown that in identifying the 'winners' and 'losers' in forest product commercialisation we can conclude that an enterprise, community, or individual household may experience both winning and losing situations and that they may win and lose at different times of the year or season depending on certain circumstances. The lesson that has emerged is that there are winners' and losers' qualities or behaviour that influence the distribution of benefits in commercialisation.

Outputs from the 'Winners & Losers' project are extensive and diverse, ranging from scientific papers to educational materials. One such output is a half-hour professional quality video film, Trees of Life: 10 lessons from the marula and crabwood trees, due to be shown on national television in the study countries and available on VHS for wider educational dissemination.

More information about the project and (coming soon) downloadable reports and other outputs can be found at the 'Winners & Losers' website at <<http://www.ceh-wallingford.ac.uk/research/winners/>>

For more information, please contact:

Dermot O'Regan

Water Policy & Management

CEH Wallingford

Maclean Building

Crowmarsh Gifford

Oxfordshire

United Kingdom

OX10 8BB

E-mail: dpo@ceh.ac.uk <<mailto:dpo@ceh.ac.uk>>

Tel: +44(0) 1491 692417

Fax: +44(0) 1491 692338