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# AFRICAN FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

## TWENTIETH SESSION

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### **NON WOOD FOREST PRODUCTS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

1. According to FAO, Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs) are goods of biological origin other than wood derived from forests, other wooded land and trees outside forests. They are important everywhere in Africa, and particularly in Central Africa, for more than 100 millions of people as a source of employment and income, food, medicinal products to cure common ailments, and as construction materials. In Central Africa, NWFPs became more important during the economic crisis of the mid 1980s which caused the decline of the international prices of cocoa and coffee and induced farmers to diversify their income sources by exploiting increasingly NWFPs for consumption and mainly for sales (FAO, 2014). This contribution discusses the opportunities and the challenges for NWFPs in Africa and makes recommendations for consideration by the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC).

#### **I. Importance of NWFP to economies in Africa and to the livelihoods in rural areas**

##### **A. Importance of NWFP to economies in Africa**

2. NWFPs are important to the national economies in Africa although an effort should be made to obtain more reliable statistics. In Cameroon the value of NWFPs commercialized annually varies between USD 120 million (Eba Atyi et al, 2013) and 470 million (Ingram et al., 2010<sup>1</sup>). In addition, the Government of Cameroon collects USD 230,000 as tax revenues from NWFPs (Eba Atyi et al,

<sup>1</sup> Including fuelwood

2013)<sup>2</sup>. In Namibia, the annual value of NWFPs varies between USD 12 and 76 million, USD 26 million in Botswana and USD 36 million in Swaziland (Lehoux and Chakib, 2012). In South Africa, the economic value of medicinal plants is USD 42.5 million dollars (Lehoux and Chakib, 2012).

### **B. Importance of NWFPs to the livelihoods in the rural areas:**

3. NWFPs provide employment to women and men and strengthen the food security and nutrition of households. In Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), NWFPs represent the main source of incomes for 30 percent of harvesters (Ingram, 2012). In Cameroon and in Central African Republic, women traders of *Gnetum* spp., a leafy vegetable, can earn between USD 98 and 110 per month and USD 132 respectively, which is higher than the minimum wage in these countries (Ingram et al., 2010). The revenues obtained from the sale of NWFP enable local communities to purchase food (SDG2<sup>3</sup>), to pay for children's education (SDG4) and family health and clothing (SDG3) (Table 1)

Table 1. Allocation of revenues from sales of NWFP in COMIFAC countries (%)

COMIFAC <sup>4</sup> Countries	Food (SDG 2)	Education (SDG 4)	Health (SDG 3)	Clothing (SDG 3)
Burundi	28.0	9.5	5.9	8.9
Cameroon	26.4	29.1	24.7	6.7
Chad	32.0	14.0	26.0	15.0
CAR	19.6	14.9	21.7	17.0
Congo	29.1	11.0	26.1	16.5
DRC	32.0	26.0	14.0	10.0
Equatorial Guinea	35.0	20.0	15.0	0.0
Gabon	27.0	10.9	17.5	7.3
Rwanda	16.9	10.1	13.4	7.8
Sao Tome and Principe	32.0	14.0	26.0	15.0

Source: FAO NWFP projects.

## **II. Examples of projects in Africa to develop the sector**

4. In Central Africa and under the supervision of COMIFAC, several international organisations have supported projects to develop the NWFP sector. Since 1996, the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) has been working on domestication of NWFP, while the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) worked on the organisation, conduct and performance of NWFP markets (Ndoye et al, 1997). FAO has implemented several projects on NWFPs since 2003. The subjects covered are entrepreneurial development, food security, policy, strategies and sustainable management of NWFPs in the COMIFAC countries. In West, Eastern, Southern and North Africa, several projects have been implemented to develop the NWFP sector (Walters, 2001). However, despite all these efforts more political will is needed to boost the sector and to strengthen Africa's possibility to get higher revenues from NWFP exports .

## **III. Requirements for improving commercial opportunities**

5. In order to increase the commercial potential of NWFPs, attention needs to be paid to the following issues:

<sup>2</sup> This amount is low. A recommendation has been made in the revision of the current forestry law to increase the level of taxation.

<sup>3</sup> SDG=Sustainable Development Goals defined in 2015 by the United Nations

<sup>4</sup> Central African Forest Commission

- Infrastructure development: improved roads are needed to facilitate the movements of NWFPs from supply to distribution centers. Storage facilities are also required to enable a good matching of supply and demand of NWFPs.
- Local processing of NWFPs should be stimulated for more value addition and creation of employment. Processing equipment needs to be affordable and widely disseminated throughout Africa.
- Improvement of the packaging and overall quality of products will enhance the competitiveness of the NWFP sector while ensuring to satisfy the needs and preference of consumers.
- Market and entrepreneurial development: NWFP markets need to be organized and structured so that they become more formalized. Furthermore, the capacity of actors involved in the NWFP value chains should be strengthened to enable them to face the challenges of globalization of markets. This will enable local communities to maximize the revenues they receive from NWFP, which will give them more incentives to protect NWFP trees. Furthermore, development of local, national, and regional markets will facilitate NWFP trade within and between countries.
- Political, legal and institutional frameworks need to be improved and adapted to the local context. With support from FAO the 10 COMIFAC countries have made a lot of progress in incorporating the COMIFAC guidelines on NWFPs into their national legislations.
- There is a need to ensure that local communities have secure access to NWFPs. Particular attention should be given to women who are important users of forests and forest resources like NWFPs.
- The certification of NWFPs integrating the quality and the traceability of the product should be encouraged to enable local communities get higher prices for their NWFPs. The project "prokarite" implemented by ICRAF has made a good effort in certification of shea products (Masters et al., 2004). An initiative that is becoming more popular in Central Africa is related to the concept of geographical indication which identifies the origin of the product by a sign. Furthermore, "the qualities, characteristics, or reputation of the products should be essentially due to the place of origin." ([http://www.wipo.int/geo\\_indications/en/](http://www.wipo.int/geo_indications/en/)). In Cameroon, honey from Mount Oku has already a geographical indication. Other NWFPs *Gnetum* spp, *Ricinodendron heudelotii*, *Irvingia gabonensis*, *Garcinia kola*, and *Cola acuminata* will soon follow. (Kazé, Béatrice, 2015).

#### **IV. Threat to livelihoods of Communities**

6. International trade of NWFPs enables African countries to get important revenues and should be stimulated. For example, Nigeria's export of gum Arabic was estimated at USD 88.08 million in 2004<sup>5</sup>. Exports of shea butter from Burkina Faso amounted 2,934 billion CFA Francs (USD 4.89 million)<sup>6</sup>. However, African countries would benefit from exporting processed rather than unprocessed NWFPs.

7. Deforestation and forest degradation is an important challenge as it reduces the number of standing NWFP trees thereby impacting negatively on the livelihood opportunities of forest dependent communities. Furthermore, many NWFP trees such as *Baillonella toxisperma* (moabi) and *Entandrophragma cylindricum* (Sapelli) are not only good sources of NWFPs for local communities, but provide valuable wood for timber companies as well. Domestication and cultivation of NWFP trees could reduce the conflicts between local communities and timber companies.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.foramfera.com/index.php/news-and-press-release/item/111-gum-arabic-export-in-nigeria-non-oil-export-opportunity-in-nigeria>;

<sup>6</sup> <http://investirauburkina.net/index.php/syntheses-economiques/agro/item/620-beurre-de-karite-la-reprise-des-exportations-se-confirme>

## V. Points for consideration

8. The Commission may wish to:
- Encourage the governments in Africa to support local value addition of NWFPs, market and entrepreneurial development aimed at increasing production and revenues and strengthening the contribution of NWFPs to food security and nutrition.
  - Encourage the governments in Africa to set up viable institutions that collect reliable data on NWFP value chains in a sustainable way.
  - Encourage FAO to continue its policy dialogue with decision makers in Africa to sensitize them on the importance of NWFP for livelihoods, poverty reduction and food security and nutrition and on the necessity to invest in the NWFP sector.

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