



A GLOBAL ALLIANCE ON NON-WOOD FOREST PRODUCTS



The Overstory/C. A. Sobel and M.-A. Cotter

The well-being of more than half of the 1.2 billion people who live in poverty and depend on non-wood forest resources for their livelihood will not improve unless the resources from which these products originate are managed in such a way that harvests are sustainable. Forests still cover some 30 percent of the earth's land area; most forest-dependent people, be they poor or not, have few options except to gather and hunt non-wood forest products (NWFPs) for their food and medicines, and the resources from which these essential items originate are not adequately included in forest management efforts. The potential contributions of non-wood forest products to alleviating poverty, ensuring food security and sustaining forest biological diversity are not being fully realized. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals of alleviating poverty, providing for food security and ensuring environmental sustainability will not be achievable unless these resources and the particular needs of forest-dependent people to gather and hunt are fully integrated into national forestry and related programmes and into the concept of sustainable forest management.

Global efforts to conserve forest biological diversity need to be complemented and go hand in hand with similar programmes on the sustainable management, use, processing and marketing of all forest resources, including

NWFPs. Conservation efforts will fail unless all forest resources are fully integrated, through an ecosystem approach, into work plans, programmes and actions of organizations working towards these goals. Yet, at the interface between biodiversity conservation and resource use, there is a significant lack of technical, institutional, political and financial capacity for these programmes to address adequately the diverse and complex issues that arise when considering NWFPs. Many forestry-oriented organizations are struggling with the complexities of integrating NWFPs into their programmes. They lack awareness on their value and importance, and insufficient information and knowledge concerning all aspects of NWFPs are cited as the major reasons for not incorporating them into their forest management and related programmes.

Current global efforts

Over the last two decades, many organizations have started working on various aspects of non-wood forest resources and products. A growing number of intergovernmental organizations, bodies and convention secretariats, as well as national and international research and development institutions, are embracing the need to incorporate NWFPs into their efforts to achieve sustainable development, and improve the livelihoods of forest-dependent people. Some major international forestry institutions, such as the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the International Center for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), the Convention on Biological Diversity, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and FAO, have integrated NWFPs into their programmes. A few organizations, such as the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Programme of Asia (MAPPA) and Royal Roads University in British Columbia (Centre for Non-Timber Resources) have programmes that expressly focus on non-wood forest products. International networks (e.g. the International Network on

Bamboo and Rattan, the Medicinal Plant Working Group of the Plant Conservation Alliance, the Global Bushmeat Network, and the Network for Natural Gums and Resins) have been formed on specific NWFP commodities or issues. Several Internet-based databases are available to distribute knowledge and information concerning NWFPs. More than 100 stakeholders, representing at least 60 organizations from 25 countries, expressed their concerns and identified major issues and provided recommendations to address these issues during the XII World Forestry Congress (WFC) side event on "Strengthening Global Partnerships to develop NWFPs" (Quebec, 2003). It has been generally expressed that more concerted and collaborative efforts are needed to integrate NWFPs fully into poverty alleviation, food security and biological diversity programmes and forest management plans. Working together a group of organizations can have a greater impact.

Proposed approach

A global alliance, therefore, is envisioned with the goal of facilitating the integration of NWFPs into sustainable forest management and related programmes, helping alleviate poverty and improving food security for forest-dependent people, while conserving forest biological diversity, at the:

- *international level* to streamline international environmental agreements, and integration with poverty-reduction strategies of NWFP-related issues;
- *national level* to integrate NWFPs into sustainable development plans for different sectors, and the development of integrated land-use planning; and
- *local level* to improve land-use planning at a landscape or watershed scale, and adequate forest management plans.

Objectives

To achieve this goal, three strategic objectives are proposed:

1. Build awareness and commitments among policy-makers of relevant



(donor) organizations and governmental agencies concerning the importance and value of NWFPs; and to have these products as integral components of their agency's sustainable forestry, rural development, poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation programmes.

2. Foster synergies among organizations within and outside the forest sector by encouraging dialogue and collaboration in order to build multidisciplinary approaches and collaboration across sectors, agencies and ministries (Health, Trade, Customs, Education, etc.).
3. Improve capacities (technical, political, institutional, financial) of (inter) national organizations to integrate NWFPs into their work programmes.

Actions

The objectives focus on three levels – improving policies, increasing collaboration and building capacities.

Achieving these objectives will lead to:

- better integration of NWFPs into forestry and related programmes within organizations that do not fully embrace them;
- more international organizations (dealing with NWFP issues) working together to increase synergies among their respective programmes and, at the national level, facilitate constructive dialogue among local governments and communities; and
- an increase in the abilities of implementing agencies and national and local organizations to integrate NWFPs into their respective programmes and fieldwork.

Through a global dialogue with the WFC side event participants, representatives of international organizations and colleagues, a number of actions have been identified that would help to advance the proposed objectives of the alliance. Initial activities are proposed, and it must be stressed that the development of a definitive strategy and plan of action would be undertaken through a reiterative process with interested parties. Proposed actions

relative to each objective include:

Build awareness and commitment

1. Provide and exchange information and knowledge to and among decision-makers in relevant organizations so that they can make more informed decisions regarding non-wood forest products (e.g. by facilitating data gathering and exchange among (inter) national agencies, and making NWFP information easily accessible and user-friendly by "cross-linking" to existing info-databases of relevant agencies).
2. Facilitate interactive fora to improve awareness and information exchange (e.g. joint agency exhibits or side events on NWFP-related issues during Conference of Parties meetings and other international fora).
3. Facilitate the integration of national NWFP strategies that could be incorporated into National Forest Programmes of interested countries and in Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes.

Foster synergies

1. Develop communications with organizations within and outside the traditional forestry community, and including the private sector, with the idea of finding commonalities to build collaboration (e.g. World Health Organization, World Trade Organization and International Labour Organization) in order to achieve their respective mandates.
2. Provide opportunities for organizations to learn about the activities of other organizations and pursue mutual cooperation.

Improve capacities

1. Assess and make available current knowledge of practices and policies that will lead to more information concerning NWFPs:
 - Augment mechanisms whereby research results are readily available to organizations, end users and other stakeholders that would benefit from this knowledge to improve their programmes.
2. Assess and take actions to strengthen the technical skills and knowledge base that are inhibiting efforts to

integrate NWFPs into national forest programmes, by:

- a. regional NWFP assessments with the FAO Regional Forest Commissions to undertake needs and resource assessments to allow for region specific recommendations on conservation priorities, and training and research needs;
 - b. developing the skills of the staff of implementing organizations to integrate NWFPs more effectively into forestry and related programmes; and
 - c. knowledge assessments to identify sources of traditional knowledge, establishing models that integrate scientific and traditional knowledge into decision-making.
3. Develop a framework for model forests that incorporate NWFPs, and demonstrate how NWFPs can be integrated into sustainable forest management by promoting multistakeholder cooperation to:
 - a. craft guidelines to assess how well NWFPs are integrated into forest management;
 - b. craft guidelines for sustainable harvesting, inventory and monitoring protocols;
 - c. develop methods to analyse the value-added of integrating NWFPs;
 - d. support country-led processes to integrate NWFPs into forestry programmes; and
 - e. exchange knowledge to strengthen policy, regulatory and development framework at the community, regional and national levels.

Value-added

For an alliance to be successful, there must be value-added to the programmes of respective members. Below are illustrations of how the alliance might add value to programmes:

- better integration of NWFPs into forestry conservation and poverty alleviation programmes building on models and approaches developed by alliance members;
- increasing the benefits of research by better distribution of results of on-farm



production of NWFPs as well as sustainable harvest practices from forests;

- further development and more widespread usage of research methodologies and protocols, especially comparative case studies and on-farm evaluation trials;
- better statistical data on harvests and production of wild species to achieve demands for reporting to international agreements or to meet Millennium Development Goals;
- NWFPs with high potential to contribute to income and employment are identified and targeted by donors, development agencies and government interventions;
- more financial support for projects that integrate NWFPs;
- more and better integration of NWFPs into international forestry development projects;
- more and better cooperation and work on sustainable use of non-wood forest products, including technology transfer and capacity-building;
- more involvement and commitment from private sector on sustainable harvesting and compliance with regulations; and
- cross-disciplinary information exchange that fosters synergies that could make resource assessments more cost-effective as integral to forest inventories.

Advancing the process

To keep the momentum going will require a concerted effort. To facilitate the proposed alliance, the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO) and FAO propose the following actions:

1. Convene an expert workshop in the near future with staff from interested agencies/countries and potential alliance members to better refine the objectives and actions of the alliance, as well as the draft strategy, work plan, structure and functions of the alliance, and to define targets and success indicators.
2. Launch the Global Alliance: target 2005/2006.

For more information, please contact:
Jim Chamberlain, USDA Forest Service,
Southern Research Station, 200 Weaver
Boulevard, PO Box 2680, Asheville,
NC 28802, USA.

E-mail: jachambe@vt.edu;

or

Paul Vantomme, International Tropical
Timber Organization, International
Organizations Center, 5th Floor, 1-1,
Minato-Mirai, Nishi-Ku, Yokohama 220,
Japan.

Fax: +81 45 2231111;

e-mail: vantomme@itto.or.jp;

or

Hikojiro Katsuhisa, Chief, Forest
Products Service, Forest Products and
Economics Division, FAO.

E-mail: Hikojiro.Katsuhisa@fao.org



MICROCREDIT/ MICROFINANCE

2005 is the International Year of Microcredit. Microfinance gives millions of rural men and women the opportunity to find their own solutions to poverty.

Microfinance and NWFPs

The lack of financial inputs and access to providing microfinance services (MFSs) to local producers has been identified as a bottleneck for many forest projects, including developing small-scale NWFP enterprises. In the context of the International Year of Microcredit 2005, the Norway Partnership Programme at FAO has carried out a study that reviews different types of microfinance institutions (MFIs) and MFSs, the role that they can play in the forestry sector given the

characteristics of small-scale forest-based enterprises and forest communities, and their impact on local livelihoods and environment. This paper is based on the results of that study.

[See page 70 for more information on the Norway Partnership Programme.]

Microfinance

Microfinance is the supply of basic financial services to poor and low-income households, and their microenterprises. Microfinance comprises several financial instruments such as credit, savings, leasing, equity finance, insurance and remittances. MFSs are provided by a variety of MFIs, which can be broadly divided into: bank MFIs; non-governmental organizations; credit and savings cooperatives and associations; and non-financial and informal sources.

Providing financial services for small-scale enterprises is a powerful instrument for poverty reduction that enables the poorer households to build assets, increase incomes and reduce their vulnerability to economic stress and external shocks. Microfinance allows better planning and management of consumption and investments, thus helping rural households to cope with risks and opening opportunities for improving their living conditions, including health and education, by smoothing the household cash flow and increasing disposable family income.

To be an effective, long-term poverty reduction instrument, MFIs must provide services and products which address and suit the needs of the rural poor and their small-scale enterprises, be sustainable and have a wide outreach.

Small-scale NWFP enterprises

When looking at expansion opportunities, small-scale NWFP enterprises face a wide array of potential problems, which can be summarized as follows:

- shortage of finance, in particular working capital, worsened by problems of access to what is available and by its cost;
- raw material shortages, owing to overexploitation or natural causes, and often compounded by wasteful



Importance of different MFSs for small-scale NWFP enterprises

MFSs	NWFP
Savings	High – to smooth out seasonalities and idle periods due to shortages of raw materials
Individual lending	Low – the lack of collateral is a common problem
Group lending	High – more standardized loans with usually lower interest rates
Short-term microcredit	High – to finance working capital requirements
Long-term, larger microcredit	Low to moderate – possibly to finance equipment purchases (as an alternative to leasing) for processing
Leasing	Moderate – for equipment purchases
Equity finance	Low – mainly for possible capital-intensive, high-risk processing activities
Microinsurance	Moderate High – for loan repayment for high-risk business
Remittances	High – to finance working capital and smooth out seasonalities

processing, restrictive regulations, poor distribution and lack of working capital;

- small and insecure markets, owing to low rural incomes, seasonality, poor access to large markets and severe competition;
- non-availability of appropriate technology in the form of suitable tools and equipment;
- managerial weaknesses, which serve to worsen all the other problems since small-scale enterprises often lack the capacity to analyse situations and chart ways of minimizing the adverse impacts of problems; and
- lack of organization of the enterprises in a manner which enables them to make effective use of available support services.

Small-scale enterprises most commonly cite finance as the principal constraint they encounter in maintaining their competitive position and developing their activities, with shortages of raw material often being mentioned as the second most important constraint. Even though the focus in this article is on microfinance, it is important to point out that the problems interact and this needs

to be taken into consideration when looking at the overall development of small-scale NWFP forest enterprises.

The income deriving from a small-scale NWFP enterprise is often integrated with other household budgets. Finances for the NWFP-based activities, consumption and household investments are in the household practice miscellany, and it is sometimes difficult to tie funds to a single specific activity. Therefore, the focus should be on providing MFSs for rural households. The MFSs provided should offer rural households a choice of the various financing options that are best adapted to possible heterogeneous investment and production strategies.

Small-scale NWFP enterprises' demand for microfinance will stem from the investments needed for their productive activities as well as from their development opportunities. It will be affected by the accessibility of the MFSs and their costs, including the interest rates and transaction costs, which will determine the viability of the investments. To be able to avail themselves profitably of MFSs, small-scale NWFP enterprises must be economically viable and sound.

Limited access to MFSs is a constraint to the development of small-scale NWFP enterprises. The nature of their activity and the fact that they are generally located in remote inaccessible areas make it particularly challenging, and costly, for MFIs to reach out to. However, several key factors and interventions can facilitate MFI outreach, notably: establishing a policy framework conducive to microfinance; providing business development services and market infrastructure in support of production; and enhancing the capacity of MFIs to service small-scale NWFP enterprises effectively.

Accessibility of MFSs is also affected by social considerations and barriers such as illiteracy, the disempowerment of women and cultural and religious factors. Banks and other financial institutions are perceived to be powerful institutions and many rural people may not have the confidence to approach them. In communities not used to financial services, people may be afraid of getting involved in these activities.

In low population density and remote access areas, to become fully sustainable and continue to expand services to the poor, MFIs will have to develop innovative products, delivery mechanisms and financial technologies that contribute to breaking these barriers and lowering the costs, and establish sustainable linkages between more formal financial institutions and informal service providers.

Group lending is a valuable tool for MFIs to reduce the costs involved in reaching out to small-scale NWFP enterprises, as it reduces transportation and transaction costs and requires less knowledge of the production because of the peer member screening and repayment pressure, and helps MFIs achieve financial sustainability with lower interest rates. Group collateral substitutes help lenders and borrowers to overcome some of the problems related to the availability and effectiveness of conventional collateral in rural and forest areas.

Increasing the supply of MFSs to small-scale NWFP enterprises could





include activities such as: upgrading and mainstreaming informal financial institutions (registration, reporting, legal status, prudential practices, supervision); capacity building and training of MFI staff, including those of the small-scale NWFP enterprises and their activities; supporting linkages and networks among MFIs and establishing apex services; linking banks with local informal financial MFIs; transforming agricultural development banks into sustainable providers of agricultural finance and other MFSs.

Governments should ensure that adequate financial policies and infrastructure are in place to facilitate small-scale NWFP enterprises' continued access to sound and reliable MFSs. Ceilings on interest rates limit the ability of MFIs to attain viability and provide permanent access to MFSs to an increasing number of households. Subsidized targeted credit programmes, most often beset by poor loan collection rates, undermine the development of sustainable microfinance and distort the market. Sound financial procedures and the autonomous management of MFIs should be respected. Allowing for cost-covering prices and promoting competition and institutional efficiency, while focusing on transparency in pricing, will enable interest rates to come down in time. (Contributed by: Anna Springfors, Associate Professional Officer, Forest Products and Economics Division, FAO.)

Microcredit for small-scale NWFP enterprises in Nepal: the Micro Enterprise Development Programme in Parbat district
Microcredit has successfully been provided to small-scale NWFP enterprises in the Parbat district of Nepal. This article is based on a case study that was carried out by the Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources (ANSAB) for the Norway Partnership Programme at FAO.

Parbat district is one of the 75 districts of Nepal, situated in the hills of the Western Development Region. Agriculture is the mainstay of Parbat district with 90.82 percent of the population depending on it.



The local economy is also heavily dependent on remittances, which amount to 38 percent of the district's total GDP. Agriculture and livestock activities represent 64.5 percent of the total district production, followed by forest production (mostly NWFPs) at 11.5 percent. Given the vast forest resources available, the data show that they are not being fully utilized economically.

The major constraints to accessing microcredit are the lack of collateral available to forest microentrepreneurs and the risks linked to the great uncertainties in terms of government sector policies, the market and the supply of raw materials. Because of the limited access to funds besides their own savings and family sources, small-scale NWFP enterprises commonly finance their commercial activities through moneylenders or local business community groups (dhukuti). Moneylenders usually charge extremely high interest rates, much above commercial ones; their loans are small in size and usually given to locally well-known and better-off people. Dhukuti also charge higher interest rates than the microfinance institutions (MFIs), and have to auction their lending funds to ration their limited resources.

A number of donor-funded and government-supported projects are working in the district for poverty alleviation, with several of them active in the area of microfinance. As a result, many small-scale NWFP enterprises are being established by poor households with the support of enterprise development and financial services.

The Micro Enterprise Development Programme (MEDEP)

MEDEP is a government initiative, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which started in 1998 and covers ten districts, including Parbat. The programme has adopted a comprehensive business development services approach to microenterprise development. MEDEP starts with entrepreneurship development, followed by market study, skill development, microcredit, access to appropriate technology and business counselling, linkages to market and development of a subcontracting system.

MEDEP provides microcredit through special partnering arrangements with the Agriculture Development Bank of Nepal (ADBN), building on the bank's existing network of branch and subbranch offices. Microcredit is provided on a cost-sharing basis of a 30 percent contribution by MEDEP and 70 percent by ADBN, and is managed jointly by ADBN and MEDEP.

MEDEP has accomplished significant achievements in Parbat district. The programme has established about 673 entrepreneurs, exceeding the original target of developing 600 microentrepreneurs and creating employment in the district's rural areas.

About 36 percent (242) of the enterprises created were small-scale forest-based enterprises, mostly NWFPs, such as beekeeping (98), bamboo and nigalo crafts (45), lapsi processing (33), allo processing (33), ketuky (agave plant) processing (7), soap manufacturing (6), chiraito production (1), incense stick making (1). The total amount disbursed to these enterprises is about NRs 934 500 (US\$12 800), or about 32 percent of the total loans approved, with an excellent recovery rate of 99.4 percent.

In terms of financial sustainability, results show that even after including MEDEP's present subsidy of the salaries and other overhead costs to ADBN, the net profit is still high, more than 5 percent. The model appears sustainable even after the phasing out of MEDEP. This is particularly significant, as most of the MFIs in Nepal are generally not making a



profit but are actually making a loss, and every year the government has to allocate funds to rescue them.

MEDEP has identified the following key factors behind its success in Parbat district:

- the selection of the right target people applying scientific and stringent selection criteria, identifying potential microentrepreneurs who are well motivated and with adequate business potential;
- a proper comprehensive and sequential delivery of business development services, including entrepreneurship development, skill development and market promotion, which considers microfinance as one of the services that should come at the end of the sequence; and
- accurate monitoring, follow-up and business counselling after enterprise establishment.

(Contributed by: Anna Springfors, Associate Professional Officer, Forest Products and Economics Division, FAO.)

For more information, please contact:
Sven Walter, NWFP Programme,
 Forest Products and Economics
 Division, Forestry Department, FAO.
 Fax: +39 0657055618;
 e-mail: Sven.Walter@fao.org;
 or
Sophie Grouwels, Community-based
 Enterprise Development Officer,
 Forestry Policy and Institutions
 Service, FONP, Forestry Department,
 FAO.
 Fax: +39 0657055514;
 e-mail: Sophie.Grouwels@fao.org



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MICROCREDIT 2005

Microcredit and microfinance have already changed and revitalized the lives of individuals and communities in the world's poorest countries. Access to even modest financial services can empower people to fight their way out of poverty and allows easier access to school fees, health care, nutrition or housing. Yet studies have shown that of the 4 billion people who live on less than US\$1 400 a year, only a fraction have access to basic financial services. With this huge unmet demand, the UN Year of Microcredit 2005, jointly coordinated by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), is calling upon the international community to build inclusive financial sectors and strengthen the powerful, but often untapped, entrepreneurial spirit that exists in impoverished communities. For guidelines and inspiration for participation, visit the official Web site of the International Year of Microcredit (www.gdrc.org/icm/iym2005/). (Source: *Peak to Peak*, December 2004.)

Zambia launches K 3 billion forestry credit facility

The Zambian Government has launched a K 3 billion forestry development credit facility aimed at providing affordable financing to the micro-, small and medium enterprises in the forestry sector. The money would be disbursed according to the criteria to be worked out by the various stakeholders.

The money would be available as credit to develop the forest resource through activities such as tree planting, training in optimal utilization of forest resources and recapitalization of forest resources. It would also be used for processing wood and non-wood products to produce quality finished products for

local consumption and export. (Source: *The Times of Zambia* [Ndola], 3 June 2004.)

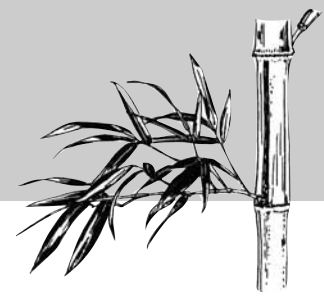
Microfinance Gateway

The Microfinance Gateway is a good resource for publications on microfinance. You can download these publications at no charge and join a library update mailing list. Recent postings include "Creating rural entrepreneurs 2000-2004" and "The social impact of microfinance and how to measure it?".

(www.microfinancegateway.org)

PRODUCTOS FORESTALES NO MADEREROS EN AMÉRICA LATINA Y SUS PERSPECTIVAS AL 2020

Los productos forestales no madereros (PFNM) son de gran importancia para las comunidades campesinas e indígenas de América Latina que habitan dentro y en los alrededores de las áreas boscosas. Algunos se cosechan y procesan a nivel industrial a gran escala, principalmente en el Brasil, la Argentina, Honduras, México, Bolivia y el Perú. Debido a la importancia local de algunos de estos productos su comercio es, por lo general, informal, su importancia económica relativa y escasa la disponibilidad de datos estadísticos y estudios detallados sobre los mismos que dificulta su análisis. Por ejemplo, mientras que estos productos en la subregión son de suma importancia para las comunidades campesinas e indígenas, no lo son así a nivel internacional. Para citar un ejemplo, en México se utilizan cerca de 1 000 PFNM, de los cuales 70 son muy comunes en el mercado interno, llegando a una producción anual de 68 000 toneladas entre gomas, ceras, fibras, hongos, cortezas, para enumerar sólo algunos. La mayoría de estos productos son de uso doméstico, pero también existe infraestructura industrial para la producción de aquellos PFNM más requeridos (resina de pino, lechuguilla, palmilla, orégano, vainilla y candelilla),



algunos de los cuales se exportan a diversas naciones centroamericanas. Entre los PFSM más importantes en América Latina se pueden enumerar los siguientes:

- **Alimentos:** yerba mate (*Ilex paraguariensis*), castaña de pará (*Bertholletia excelsa*) y palmito (*Euterpe oleraceae* o *Euterpe predatoria*). Otros alimentos, pero sólo de importancia local, son los frutos del algarrobo (*Prosopis* spp.) en el Perú, los hongos silvestres en el Ecuador, el achiote (*Bixa orellana*) en Venezuela y la palma canangucha (*Mauritia flexuosa*) en Colombia.
- **Resinas y gomas:** jébe o caucho natural (*Hevea brasiliensis*), tanino (*Schinopsis quebracho-colorado*) y resinas (*Pinus* spp.).
- **Plantas medicinales:** quillay (*Quillaja saponaria*), boldo (*Peumus boldus*) y aceite de copaíba (*Copaifera officinalis*); la sábila (*Aloe vera*) usada en la industria internacional de cosméticos. Así como otras especies nativas como la zarzaparrilla (*Smilax* spp.) y la ipecacuana (*Cephaelis ipecacuanha*), o introducidas como la quina (*Ocotea veraguensis*) tienen mucha importancia económica.
- **Materiales de construcción y otros:** mimbres (*Salix viminalis*), colihue (*Chusquea* spp.), palmas (*Sabal mexicana*, *Geonoma congesta*, entre otras especies), plantas ornamentales.

Alimentos

Considerando los volúmenes de producción y comercialización, los PFSM más importantes, clasificados como alimento en América Latina, son la yerba mate (*Ilex paraguariensis*), producida principalmente en tres países de la subregión del Cono Sur (Brasil, Argentina y Paraguay), la castaña de Pará (*Bertholletia excelsa*) producida en el Brasil, Bolivia y el Perú. El palmito (*Euterpe oleraceae* o *Euterpe predatoria*) producida en los tres países anteriormente mencionados y el Ecuador. También entre ellos podemos citar para Centroamérica y México, el chicle (*Manilkara achras*), también de

importancia para Belice, Nicaragua y Guatemala. En este último país, el xate (*Chamaedorea* sp.), la pimienta gorda (*Pimenta dioica*), posee también considerable relevancia económica; al igual que para Costa Rica, la vainilla (*Vanilla* sp.) y la jamaica (*Pimenta guatemalensis*). La población de Honduras utiliza más de 300 especies de la flora para autoconsumo y comercialización de subsistencia con fines de alimentación, lo cual muestra la importancia de estos productos para la dieta diaria de su población.



Bixa orellana

1. Yerba mate (*Ilex paraguariensis*)

La yerba mate, natural del noroeste de la Argentina, el Paraguay y el sur del Brasil, se utiliza en la preparación de infusiones. Las características geográficas y climatológicas de las provincias de Misiones y de Corrientes en la Argentina, contribuyeron a que este país sea actualmente el principal productor mundial, habiendo cubierto en 1998 el 60 por ciento de la producción total. En el Brasil, que es el segundo productor mundial, la yerba se extrae principalmente de bosques nativos ubicados en el sur del país (Estados de Paraná, Santa Catarina y Rio Grande do Sul) y en el oeste del Estado de Mato Grosso do Sul. En el Paraguay, tercer productor, el cultivo se realiza en el departamento de Itapúa y, en menor cantidad, en los departamentos de Alto Paraná y Canindeyú. La producción de yerba mate entre 1990 y 2002, particularmente en la Argentina y el Paraguay, ha crecido a tasas elevadas. El crecimiento de la producción del Brasil fue más bajo.

Las perspectivas para los próximos años apuntan al mantenimiento de la tendencia observada en la última década, principalmente con crecimientos acentuados de la producción en la Argentina, en función al incremento de la demanda interna, e incrementos menos pronunciados en el Brasil y el Paraguay. De acuerdo a esas expectativas para el 2020 la producción de yerba mate en América Latina, que en la actualidad es de 556 000 toneladas, habrá alcanzado poco más de 850 000 toneladas.

2. Castaña de Pará (*Bertholletia excelsa*)

La producción de castaña de Pará tiene importancia en Bolivia, el Brasil y en menor escala en el Perú. La producción de estos tres países en 2002 fue alrededor de 55 000 toneladas, manteniéndose en los niveles del inicio de la década de los 90. Los datos disponibles son confusos y algunas publicaciones presentan al Brasil como el principal exportador mundial. Otras fuentes mencionan que Bolivia es el principal exportador de este producto en el mundo. La mayor parte de la producción de castaña de Pará en el Brasil se consume internamente (aproximadamente el 70 por ciento) y lo demás se comercializa internacionalmente. En 2002, se calcula que las exportaciones fue de aproximadamente 10 000 toneladas, mientras que el consumo interno alcanzó la cifra de 20 000 toneladas. En la última década la producción de este producto se mantuvo estable en Bolivia, tuvo un ligero crecimiento en el Brasil (1,4 por ciento anual) y decreció en el Perú. Estos indicadores muestran posibles crecimientos en la producción de castaña de Pará en las próximas décadas, pero de forma muy leve. Dentro este contexto, se espera que en el año 2020 habrá una producción máxima de 70 000 toneladas.

3. Palmito (*Euterpe oleraceae* o *Euterpe predatoria*)

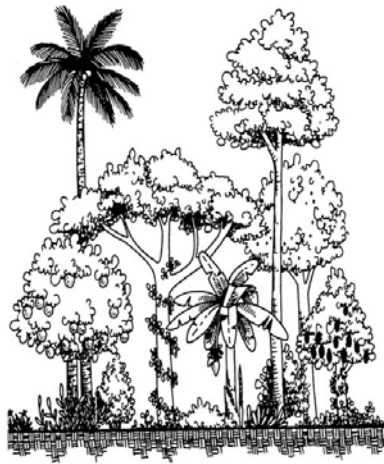
De forma similar a lo que ocurre con la castaña de Pará y la mayoría de los PFSM, las estadísticas de comercio de palmito en América Latina son escasas.



La producción de palmito en el Brasil ha crecido a partir de la década de los 80, debido al aumento de la demanda nacional e internacional. La producción derivada de la actividad extractiva de los "palmiteros" ocupa un lugar relevante en la economía de la región norte del Brasil, particularmente en el Estado de Pará. Actualmente, la producción anual conjunta de frutos y palmito en esa región del Brasil, representa recursos por aproximadamente 200 millones de dólares EE.UU.

En Bolivia el aprovechamiento del palmito es una actividad económicamente importante debido a la demanda nacional e internacional. El palmito en este país es requerido tanto para el consumo directo como para su industrialización, siendo uno de los PFNM de mayor exportación. Alrededor del 10 por ciento de la producción nacional de palmito se destina al mercado nacional y el restante 90 por ciento se exporta a los principales países limítrofes, al mercado japonés e inclusive a la Comunidad Europea con exportaciones piloto. La extracción con fines industriales de palmito en el Perú se realiza únicamente en el departamento de Loreto (Iquitos), donde funcionan dos fábricas de procesamiento para atender a las necesidades del mercado interno y de exportación. En los demás departamentos (Madre de Dios, San Martín y otros) la extracción se hace exclusivamente para el consumo local en forma directa. En el Ecuador este producto es muy apreciado a nivel nacional y su producción han crecido mucho en los últimos años. No se dispone de datos para evaluar el consumo interno y el comercio internacional, aunque se supone que la mayor parte de la producción se comercializa a nivel nacional.

La expectativa para los próximos años es que la producción continuará creciendo, puesto que debido al crecimiento demográfico aumentará su demanda por motivos de subsistencia. Es importante resaltar que las plantaciones de palmito están creciendo y consolidándose, lo cual provocará una disminución de la extracción ilegal que podría, sin embargo, continuar en pequeña escala.



The Overstory/C. A. Sobel and M.-A. Cotter

4. Otros

El comercio del algarrobo (*Prosopis* spp.) como PFNM adquiere importancia sólo en el Perú. Toda la producción se consume a nivel interno y, en base a los datos disponibles, de ésta sólo alrededor del 20 por ciento viene comercializada, es decir, cerca de 400 000 toneladas al año. El volumen restante se usa como forraje o se pierde, demostrando el carácter aún rudimentario de esta actividad.

La comercialización de hongos silvestres en el Ecuador también es una actividad bastante incipiente. La producción viene entregada directamente a los revendedores y representa un complemento importante del ingreso familiar en algunas zonas. La limitante para la expansión de la comercialización es el mercado, ya que los productos son poco conocidos en el mercado interno y las experiencias de exportación son todavía muy pequeñas.

El achiote (*Bixa orellana*) en Venezuela se utiliza como condimento y es un producto de importancia comercial sólo a nivel local. No se dispone de informaciones relativas a las cantidades consumidas y a los volúmenes de comercialización en el mercado interno.

En Colombia el aceite de palma canangucha o moriche (*Mauritia flexuosa*) se exporta. El 1999 se exportaron 110 000 toneladas de aceite de palma canangucha, de las cuales 93 000 se vendieron en crudo y el restante como fracciones o incorporadas en productos procesados. El valor de las

exportaciones se estima en 58 millones de dólares EE.UU.

Resinas y gomas

En Honduras, desde 1960, se resinan los pinos con el fin de producir aguarrás, colofonia, dipenol y aceite de pino (en 2002 se produjeron 15 240 barriles de resina). Entre los mayores productores latinoamericanos de este producto se encuentran México, Venezuela, la Argentina y el Brasil, con una producción en éste último país en la década de los 90 de entre 60 000 y 65 000 toneladas de resina. No se conocen con exactitud para cada país los volúmenes de producción actual.

El jébe ó caucho natural (*Hevea brasiliensis*), es un importante PFNM de América Latina. El caucho natural reviste mayor importancia en el Brasil. También son productores Bolivia, el Perú y Colombia, pero las cantidades producidas son muy pequeñas y su importancia es sólo local.

Para el Brasil es uno de los principales PFNM tanto desde el punto de vista económico que social. En los últimos veintidós años la producción de caucho se ha incrementado desde las cerca de 24 000 toneladas de 1990 a las 168 000 toneladas de 2002.

Los significativos crecimientos alcanzados en la producción de caucho natural y en el área plantada con "seringueira" (alrededor del 17 por ciento anual), brindan una expectativa de incremento de la actividad a mediano y largo plazo. Esta expectativa se ve confirmada por los estímulos que ofrece el gobierno del Brasil al comercio de este producto y por la gran dependencia brasileña de las importaciones. Para el 2020 se espera que las tasas de crecimiento no alcancen los valores de la última década, que fueron bastante altas, y cuyos valores no podrían ser sostenidos a ese nivel. Por lo tanto se estima que el crecimiento de la producción en los próximos años será aproximadamente del 3 por ciento anual. En caso de confirmarse las actuales perspectivas, la producción brasilera de caucho natural alcanzará en el 2020 alrededor de las 245 000 toneladas.



Plantas medicinales

Las plantas medicinales en América Latina sólo tienen importancia local. Por ejemplo, la producción y el consumo de uña de gato (*Uncaria tomentosa*) disminuyó notablemente en el Perú en los últimos diez años. Se espera que para los próximos años se mantenga el nivel de producción alcanzado a inicios de la primera década de este milenio. De cualquier forma, su importancia seguirá siendo sólo local.

El aceite de copaiba (*Copaifera officinalis*), como producto medicinal, viene ganando importancia en el Brasil, pero actualmente no hay informaciones relativas al comercio de aceite de copaiba producido en ese país. Es un producto con propiedades antiinflamatorias y otros fines medicinales. Se estima que alrededor de un 90 por ciento de las cantidades producidas se comercializan a nivel interno en el Brasil, es decir, alrededor de 300 toneladas al año. El comercio de este producto es aún incipiente principalmente porque se obtiene de forma extractiva y con rendimiento muy variable.

Existen en América Latina otros importantes PFNM con fines medicinales. Entre los más importantes se encuentran el quillay (*Quillaja saponaria*) y el boldo (*Peumus boldus* o *Boldoa fragrans*) en Chile, el aceite de palmas en Colombia y el cinchona (*Cinchona officinalis*) en Bolivia y Colombia.

Del quillay se explota tradicionalmente su corteza para extracción de la saponina. Esta puede ser utilizada contra afecciones crónicas de la piel, enemas, para afirmar el cabello, contra la bronquitis, ayuda a la digestión y combate la alopecia. Como la saponina tiene propiedad de emulsionar grasas, se usa como jabón y cosmético. A pesar de su importancia en Chile, no hay información estadística de su producción en el país.

El boldo crece en regiones semiáridas de Chile y de él se aprovechan las hojas que contienen principios activos como la boldina, usada en medicina por sus propiedades analgésicas, diuréticas y antirreumáticas, la boldoglusina, el aceite esencial, la esparteína, alcaloides del tipo coridina, laurotetanina, tanino, flavonoides,

ácido cítrico, goma y azúcar. El boldo en Chile y el aceite de copaiba en el Brasil verán incrementada en los próximos años su importancia como PFNM destinados a uso medicinal. Sin embargo, su importancia continuará siendo solo local.

No existen datos estadísticos de consumo interno y comercio internacional de aceite de palmas en Colombia y de cinchona en Bolivia y Colombia, sin embargo se sabe que son productos de uso básicamente interno en sus países de origen y no hay aún un comercio formal de ellos.

En Centroamérica existe una cultura en el uso de plantas medicinales. En Costa Rica, el mayor uso de los PFNM se refiere a plantas medicinales tales como la cuculmeca (*Smilax cordifolia*) y la uña de gato. En El Salvador se transforman productos vegetales para producir aceites esenciales o extractos para la fabricación de medicinas, a partir de materia prima cultivada, entre ellos el *Myroxylon balsamum* var. *pereirae*.

Materiales de construcción y otros

En el Ecuador, se ha incrementado el uso del bambú, identificándose 19 talleres artesanales que lo utilizan para elaborar juguetes y otros productos en las provincias de Azuay y Esmeraldas. El principal consumidor de estos productos es la construcción civil en la región de la Costa ecuatoriana. La palma chiqui-chiqui (*Leopoldinia piassaba*) en Venezuela viene explotada principalmente por indígenas del Amazonas, a las orillas del medio Orinoco. El sistema de producción y comercialización de la fibra es bastante precario. Por un lado, los indígenas comercian mediante trueque con los países fronterizos y, por otro, los «fibreros» (trabajadores criollos) negocian en desventaja con comerciantes venezolanos y extranjeros, que se llevan aproximadamente el 80 por ciento de la producción (más de 100 toneladas al año).

En Chile ha tomado importancia el cultivo del mimbre (*Salix viminalis*), usado para la producción de muebles y otros utensilios domésticos. A pesar de esto, no se conoce la superficie total de las plantaciones y la cantidad producida

en el país. Lo que se sabe es que la producción se desarrolla en la mayor parte del país. Además, el colihue (*Chusquea* spp.), el único bambú nativo de América, que se da en Chile, con una gran capacidad de adaptación a diversas altitudes que van de 0 hasta 4 300 m.s.m., y que se usa para la fabricación de muebles en las zonas rurales del sur del país. Este género de bambú posee características especiales de resistencia y flexibilidad en relación a otros materiales. Sin embargo, no se conoce las cantidades producidas en el país.

Para mayor información acerca de la situación actual y las perspectivas para el año 2020 de todo el sector forestal –incluyendo los PFNM en América Latina, tanto a nivel nacional, subregional y regional–, se puede visitar el sitio web del Estudio de perspectivas del sector forestal para América Latina y el Caribe (ESFAL) o contactar al responsable del desarrollo de este estudio para cada región. Próximamente se encontrarán disponibles en nuestro sitio web estos documentos para los tres niveles (20 estudios nacionales, 3 subregionales y un estudio regional). En esos trabajos se describe la situación actual y se hace un análisis del escenario más probable del sector forestal para el año 2020, incluyendo en cada caso información acerca de los PFNM. (Artículo elaborado por: Olman Serrano, Sandra Rivero y Jhony Zapata, Departamento de Montes, FAO.)

Para más información, dirigirse a:

Olman Serrano, Dirección de Productos y Economía Forestales, Departamento de Montes, FAO.

Correo electrónico:

Olman.Serrano@fao.org;

www.fao.org/forestry/site/outlook/sp ●

