

non-wood

news

EDITORIAL

The editorial for this issue of Non-Wood News has been written by Dr Maxim Lobovikov, Chief of the Forest Products Service.

The current global financial crisis aggravates food security problems and draws more attention to non-wood forest products (NWFPs), particularly as an alternative source of food. Forests rarely provide the bulk of the human diet, but their role in food security is often critical. Forests and trees are significant sources of food such as fruits, berries, leaves, honey, mushrooms and bushmeat. Rural livestock often depends on fodder from forests. Wildlife in the forest environment provides an essential part of animal protein for the rural poor. A recent study undertaken in three communities in southern Cameroon revealed that, while agriculture provided 80 percent of the carbohydrate intake, rural Cameroonians received 90 percent of their protein from bushmeat. Forest fruits and herbs are excellent sources of vitamins and nutrients for rural dwellers. Millions of Asians depend largely on fish supplies from mangrove forests. According to the 2005 FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA), the reported value of forest food removals exceeds US\$1.3 billion, of which about US\$820 billion are attributed to Asia.

The role of forestry and NWFPs increases in crisis situations after wars and during natural, economic and social disasters when nutrition, fuel for cooking and heating, and timber for the reconstruction of homes and animal shelters become critical. Forest seasonal and emergency food is often a question of people's survival. In areas of frequent crop failures, food from forests is known as emergency or "famine" food. Trees and forests indirectly support food supply by providing fodder for livestock, which supply milk and meat, or for draught animals in farm production. As an example, trees provide about 50 percent of animal fodder in Nepal and some parts of India. Food insecurity in forest communities is not only a problem in developing countries, but also an issue in developed countries, especially when filling the gaps after closure of local industries and during economic crises and recessions.

Food consumption implies not only physical but also economic access to food through job and income generation. Forests generate a tremendous income for forest communities, allowing them to purchase food rather than produce it. It is estimated that about 80 percent of total employment in forestry is in the developing world, which is a major contribution to job and food security.

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is compiled and coordinated by Tina Etherington, Forest Products Service of the FAO Forest Products and Industries Division. For this issue, editing support was provided by Rebecca Rutt; language editing by Roberta Mitchell, Josiane Bonomi and Deliana Fanego; design, graphics and desktop publishing by Claudia Tonini.

Non-Wood News is open to contributions by readers. Contributions are welcomed in English, French and Spanish and may be edited to fit the appropriate size and focus of the bulletin.

If you have any material that could be included in the next issue of *Non-Wood News* for the benefit of other readers, kindly send it, before 15 May 2009, to:

NON-WOOD NEWS – FOIP

FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy

E-mail: non-wood-news@fao.org

www.fao.org/forestry/nwfp/nonwood.htm

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Access to forest resources is of primary importance for food security. Food security can be threatened if policies restrict indigenous access to the needed food resources. On the other hand, unrestricted access may cause forest degradation and destruction and jeopardize food security in the longer term. Thus, careful planning is needed, followed by strong law enforcement measures. Women traditionally play a critical role in food security issues. Consequently, forest food policies must address gender issues effectively.

Although not very apparent, "forestry" issues are increasingly "food" issues and vice versa. Forests contribute to food security and sustainable livelihoods in numerous ways, both directly and indirectly, through the support of agricultural systems, rural development, environmental integrity and income generation, climate change mitigation, etc. Governments should consider this contribution in their food security goals by integrating forestry in policy and planning mechanisms.



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Non-wood forest products (NWFPs) are goods of biological origin other than wood, derived from forests, other wooded land and trees outside forests. Non-timber forest products (NTFPs), another term frequently used to cover this vast array of animal and plant products, also includes small wood and fuelwood. However, these two terms are used synonymously throughout this bulletin. Other terms, such as "minor", "secondary" or "speciality" forest products, are sometimes used to keep original names and/or titles.