



Impact of Laws and Regulations on the Use of Non-wood Forest Products in Central Africa

Authors: Armand Asseng Zé, Juliane Masuch and Ousseynou Ndoye
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Cameroon

Introduction

In the Congo Basin, non-wood forest products (NWFP) provide food and income for more than 100 million habitants who depend on the forests and are used for medicinal purposes, construction, tools, furniture and cultural traditions.

In a nut shell, NWFP in Central Africa

- Contribute to household food security,
- Help to generate employment and additional income,
- Offer opportunities for small and medium scale enterprises based on NWFP (SMEFs) involved in their harvest, processing and trade.

Definition of NWFP

FAO defines non-wood forest products (NWFP) as goods of biological origin other than wood, derived from forests, other wooded land and trees outside of forests.

Problem definition: Not adapted legal and regulatory framework

Legal and institutional constraints are among the factors that impede the development of the NWFP sector as they are not adapted to the realities in the field.

Scientific / commercial name (use) of selected NWFP

<i>Gnetum</i> spp. / okok / eru / foubwba (consumption, sale)	<i>Cola</i> spp. / cola (consumption, sale and medicine)
<i>Baillonella toxisperma</i> / moabi (consumption & medicine)	<i>Ricinodendron heudelotii</i> / Njansang (consumption, sale)
<i>Prunus africana</i> / prunus (medicine & sale)	<i>Pausinystalia johimbe</i> / yohimbe (medicine & sale)
<i>Irvingia</i> spp. / odika/ bush mango (consumption & sale)	<i>Laccosperma et Eremospatha</i> spp. / rattan (construction)
<i>Dacryodes edulis</i> / safou/ prune (consumption & sale)	<i>Imbrasia</i> spp. / caterpillars (consumption & sale)



Figure : Female traders of *Gnetum* spp. (Photo: O. Ndoye)

Methodology 1/2

Analyses of national legal and regulatory frameworks governing the NWFP sector in Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo, Equatorial-Guinea and Gabon were conducted between 2006 and 2007 and summarized in a regional synthesis.

Methodology 2/2

An interdisciplinary working group analyzed constraints for the development of the NWFP sector and elaborated a regional model law that was geared at giving an orientation to COMIFAC member countries on how to improve their laws, policies and institutions.

Result 1: User rights limited to subsistence use

User rights of local communities are protected by law but are limited to subsistence use only; the commercial use of NWFP is excluded though local communities, especially indigenous people as well as women and children regularly trade small quantities of these products.

Result 3: Taxes and quotas do not align with sustainable resource management

National tax systems do not reflect the different resource pressure of certain products. Quotas for NWFP exploitation are allocated without inventories and hence do not enforce the sustainable use of these resources.

FAO's response

Based on FAO's work done since 2005, FAO supports the ministries in charge of forests in Cameroon, Congo, Gabon and CAR to integrate COMIFAC's Sub-regional guidelines on the sustainable management of NWFP of plant origin in Central Africa in their national laws and by-laws.

Result 2: Heavy regulations on commercial use of NWFP

Laws and regulations are focused on the timber value chain and ignore realities of SMEFs that need to obtain professional licences and exploitation permits that are often issued by centralized administrations and related to high transaction costs. Many SMEFs therefore operate illegally.

Result 4: Illegitimate payments at roadblocks

Both, legal and illegal traders are subjected to illegitimate payments creating high transaction costs. Surveys from 2007 and 2010 state that 20 to 30 percent of the gross sales of *Gnetum* traders in Cameroon are paid at roadblocks.

Acknowledgment: This poster is based on FAO's work in Central Africa conducted since 2005 in collaboration with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF) and the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) under the supervision of the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC) and financed by the German government and the European Union (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/nwfp/55079/en/>).

Contact: Armand.Assengze@fao.org, Juliane.Masuch@fao.org, Ousseynou.Ndoye@fao.org, Yaoundé, Cameroon. 09-2011