



Sustainability of Non-Wood Forest Products



NCCF

Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests

Non Wood Forest Products in India

Introduction

India is the tenth most forested country in the world. With an area of 79.42 million hectare, some 24.16% of the country's geographical area under the forest and tree cover, we are blessed with abundant forest resources in this area.

The forested areas are a source of many resources, be it wood or non-wood resources. Also it is a fact that being a growing economy there is substantial pressure on the natural resources. There is plenty of extraction of these resources, some within sustainability limits and some without sustainability limits.

Non-Timber Forest Products, Non-Wood Forest Products, Minor Forest Products, these are the terms prevalent in the Indian context and are often used as synonyms.

The rich forests of our country offer all the major ecosystem services, be it *Cultural Services*, *Provisioning Services*, *Regulating Services* and *Supporting Services*. These NWFP products and resources are covered under the *Provisioning Services* offered by the Indian forests. Collection of non-wood forest products is an important sources of livelihood and contributes about 20-40% towards the family income for a large number of tribal population and forest dwellers. The major states having NWFPs in abundance and are in circulation within the domestic as well as export market are Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana. The rest of the states in the country are involved with the NWFP products too, may or may not be on an extensive scale as these states are and there are instance of unavailability of concrete data.

Scope of the Standard

Currently there is no exclusive functional internationally recognised NWFP certification schemes in the country. But few NWFP products for instance Honey, is getting certified under organic certification and there are plant products which are grown in the wild and can be certified as organic. This too has a limitation as not every plant collected in its natural habitat can be considered as organic. To put in place a separate Certification scheme for non-wood products of forest origin and to promote sustainable NWFP resource management.

The scheme will be structured as a meta-standard scheme along with species specific requirements wherever applicable. The primary stratification of products is under two categories namely of plant origin and of animal origin.

1. NWFP of Forest and Plant origin
 - a. Medicinal Plants in various forms; powder, extracts, essence
 - b. Myrobalans (Harida, Baheda)
 - c. Food products (berries, nuts, fruits, mushrooms)
 - d. Sal Seed/Sal Seed Oil & Sal Derivatives
 - e. Roots, leaves, barks of plants other than MAPs
 - f. Raw materials for colorants and dyes
 - g. Exudates (lac, gums, resins)
 - h. Other plant products (like cork, etc.)

2. NWFP of Animal Origin (excluding animal parts, wool, fur etc.)
 - a. Wild Honey
 - b. Beeswax
 - c. Lac
 - d. Silk
3. Bamboo, Rattans & extracts

Reference: FAO partnership program

Objectives of Developing an NWFP Certification Standard

The objectives of having unique NWFP Certification Scheme are manifold:

- To ensure resource sustainability.
- Product based certification to address the limits and thresholds values for different plant and animal origin products.
- To ensure socio-economic benefits and benefit sharing with the forest dwellers, local communities and others involved in collection of NWFPs.
- To evolve a tracking and traceability mechanism for NWFP products and resources.
- To address the concern of biodiversity conservation.
- To ensure the use and practice of traditional knowledge in management of forest resources.
- To market the products with an ecolabel.
- To promote ethical sourcing and enhance the brand equity
- Sustainable Commercialisation of the NWFP Resources

Roles of Stakeholders

A transparent and open process takes with it all the relevant stakeholders and evolve program for them with their participation. Their inputs and suggestions come from the practices followed by them and their experiences across the country. The set of stakeholders to be involved in the process include:

1. Resource owners & developers
The stakeholders who have ownership or some control over the NWFP resources or are involved in their management. These can be the forest departments, the local communities, panchayats, etc.
2. Regulatory bodies
The forest departments, national, state and local governments and some policy implied regulations.
3. Local communities
This stakeholder group is the one primarily dependent on the forest and forest based resources and also associated with the collection of NWFP resources.

4. **Resource Users; interlink btw Resource & Business**
The NWFP resource collection at field areas may not be directly reaching the manufacturer/trader. There would be persons/group of persons being an interlink in the chain between the transfer of resources or semi-finished resources form one hand to other.
5. **Product developers & Manufacturer**
The stakeholders that utilise the raw materials, value add them through various processes and carry out product development. The product may be in various forms and are available to the market for sale.
6. **Traders & consumers**
These stakeholders are in contact with the Product Developers as well with the market & consumers.

NWFP and Trade

Commercial opportunities for NWFPs are emerging in the present era of globalisation. The ease of trade is opening new markets, decentralisation & democratisation is enabling communities to have a greater role in the management of the resources. Sustainability is an important component for trade and commerce while simultaneously ensuring no-compromise in the product quality as well as competitive pricing. Irrespective of resource sustainability an ecolabel can also provide ease of trade, international market linkage, ensuring ethical trade practices and equity to local community.

Benefits of NWFP Certification Standard

A NWFP scheme will provide a set of benefits both to the scheme client, the ones involved at the collection end of the resources and an overall benefit to the ones associated with products directly or indirectly. The benefits can be classified into four major categories:

- **Economic Benefits**
The NWFP certification will ensure value addition to the forest based products, improved marketing strategies, product positioning & visibility. It will enhance the brand equity of and ensure higher credibility to the organisation.
- **Environmental Benefits**
NWFP certification will help to conserve biological diversity and maintain ecological functions and integrity of the forests along with the conservation of rare, threatened and endangered species.
- **Social Benefits**
NWFP certification will ensure the rights of local & forest dwelling communities and forest workers are respected. It helps in the maintenance of social equity, wages, equal remuneration, non-discrimination, benefits, compensation, etc. It will also assert in percolation of monetary benefits down to the grass root level and primary collectors.

- **Management Benefits**

NWFP certification will help in continuous monitoring and reporting of various activities from management aspect. The monitoring activities would ensure sustainable harvesting practices, increase in efficiencies and reduced leakage. Ethical sourcing is ensured demonstrating the good practices pertaining to environmental and social values.

About the Organisation

Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF) is a not for profit organization established under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 to promote credible forest certification in India. It is an institutional mechanism to ensure collaborative and streamlined efforts to develop national standard for Forest Management Certification in India. NCCF was officially registered in January 2015.

People's participation is an important mandate in the organisations objectives, for which NCCF adopts a "bottom-up" approach to governance. It builds on national members whose local expertise is complemented by the experiences of internationally-active organizations. The organisation has a Governing Body and a Standard Development Group (SDG). SDG comprises of professional foresters, NGOs – social and environmental, industries representatives, academicians, etc. and is the apex body constituted for developing the Standard Draft. The main functions of the SDG is to overall monitor, control and supervise the process of drafting the standard and help that document to be approved by the Governing Body of the NCCF.