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“Utilisation of diversity in land use systems:
Sustainable and organic approaches to meet human needs”

Non-Timber Forest Product Certification in China: Status, Challenges and New Approaches

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Abstract

Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) are essential to most rural livelihoods in China. Their utilisation has a long history and markets are well established. To date, China processes and trades more wild products than any other country, with markets for certified NTFP products rapidly evolving. Still, the implementation of NTFP certification schemes is lagging behind.

Certification schemes for NTFPs in China include organic certification, responsible forest management standards, i.e. landscape-based certification, product quality certification and Fair Trade.

Most certification systems in China are organic schemes of large agriculture companies, producing mostly for export. To target small-scale farmers with a diversity of products, landscape-based schemes are needed. These are, however, difficult to implement outside state forest areas, due to small-size subdivision of landscapes and differing tenure rights. Moreover, in landscape schemes, lack of farmer organisation, lack of information and unclear responsibilities make product quality uncertain.

Product quality certification requires controlled value chains of single products to achieve high consumer security. However, research showed that in China NTFP value chains build on complex network of traders, many of them operating informal. The low level of vertical coordination within these value chains makes product traceability almost impossible.

Therefore, NTFP certification in China requires the development of new approaches, such as controlled out-grower schemes with alternative value chains for product traceability to combine the improvement of product quality and establish sustainable management systems, for the benefit of producers and consumers.

In the framework of a Sino-German research project between the Chinese Academy of Forestry (CAF), the World Agroforestry Centre in China (ICRAF-China) and Hohenheim University, the aspects of producing, collecting and processing NTFPs within different value chains are analysed.

The poster presentation will feature NTFP certification status and challenges in detail, as well as, present new approaches and their requirements to succeed in China.

Keywords: Certification, China, nTFPs, value chains