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Contribution of Gum and Resin Commercialisation to Rural Livelihood in the Drylands of Ethiopia and Sudan

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Abstract

Commercialisation of NTFPs has been widely promoted as a means for rural development and conservation. Gums and resins represent commercial NTFPs with wider cultural and industrial application, predominantly extracted from the drylands of sub-Saharan Africa. The commodities are traded for millennia in local, national and international markets. The global gums and resins trade accounted for more than 600 million USD in 2011. Sudan and Ethiopia are the principal suppliers of gum arabic and frankincense, respectively. The present study investigates the extent to which the economic gains derived from gums and resins commercialisation impact rural livelihood improvement under different resource management regimes. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interview from 240 randomly selected smallholder producers in four regions, in Ethiopia and Sudan, with different resource management regimes from wild resources with open access to domesticated resources on private lands. Moreover, the household survey was complemented by secondary data, group discussions and key informant interview. Data analysis employed both qualitative analysis and descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS. In the four regions, the contribution of gum and resin income to smallholder producers' livelihood was significant constituting 15–28% of the total household income. The results reveal that the value and contribution of gum and resin based activities is highly governed by the resource management regime. The households' absolute income from gum and resin was positively correlated with the resource management regime and commercialisation level. The absolute income was higher from the cultivated resources on private lands, followed by the regulated access of wild resources. In open access resources the producers' income was the lowest although accessed by the poor, women and children. However, the level of dependence on gum and resin income was higher in the open access resource area. Households' socioeconomic characteristics, resource access, production and marketing variables determining income from gum and resin was identified using multiple regression analysis and their variation across the four study regions discussed. Overall, gum and resin commercialisation in the drylands of Ethiopia and Sudan bears potential poverty alleviation role through their safety net role and helping producers to move out of poverty.

Keywords: Ethiopia, gums and resins, livelihood, poverty alleviation, resource management regime, Sudan