Marketing of Edible Species Collected in Ancient Walnut Forest in Southern Kyrgyzstan

Yana Chernykh[1], Dietrich Darr[2], Zbynek Polesny[1], Vladimir Verner[1]

[1]*Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Fac. of Tropical AgriSciences, Czech Republic*
[2]*Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Life Sciences, Germany*

Abstract

Non timber forest products (NTFPs) are important sources of livelihoods for the rural population worldwide. It is estimated that 1.5 billion people depend on forests as their primary source of food, nutrition, medicine or energy. However, after centuries when most of the forest products supplied particularly households' needs, nowadays there is an increasing role of income generation documented. As timber marketing is extensively discussed in forestry literature, studies on economic botany and value chains of NTFPs are rather scarce. This is true also for the area of walnut forest in southern Kyrgyzstan. Our research aims to analyse use patterns, collection management and commercialisation practices of five most commonly collected products by the local households and to estimate the potential contributions to cash income generation. Transect walks, key informant interviews, value chain actors (n=25, five per each node) and household surveys (n=60) were used for data collection. Respondents were identified via convenient, snowball and voluntary sampling method. Data analysis is presented by mapping existing value chains and understanding of potential effects between household characteristics and NTFPs collection and use. Preliminary results show the important role of the forest for local households, as only two of them were not involved in the collection of any forest product. Main products collected by local households were walnuts, apples, rosehips, barberries, and mushrooms, whereby the mushroom and walnuts were of highest financial value. Walnuts and apples were intended for export, the other products supplied local markets. Cash income from forest was more important for households without remittances than for those who were receiving cash transfers from abroad with 61 % and 35 % contribution to total household income, respectively. Household characteristics (farm size, labour force, gender, age, dependent members, off-farm activities) and geophysical data (distance to collection place, distance to markets) affect volumes and number of collected products. Outcomes of the study are useful for a better understanding of the role of the forest in the local livelihood under currently changing environment (climate change, monetarisation of rural economy, land use policy).

Keywords: Central Asia, household survey, markets, non-timber forest products, value chain

Contact Address: Vladimir Verner, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences, 129 Kamycka street, 16500 Prague 6 - Suchdol, Czech Republic, e-mail: vernerv@ftz.czu.cz