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Market Potential of Hornet (*Vespa* sp.) in Eastern Shan State, Myanmar

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Abstract

Eastern Shan State, a border gate to Thailand, Laos, and China, is known for its diversity in ethnic groups such as Shan, Burma, Kachin, Lisu, Ann, Akha, Wa, Danu, and Larhu. A big variety of edible insects can be found in that region such as bamboo worms, silkworms, cicadas, hornets, and crickets, which are mostly eaten by these ethnic groups. Unlike other edible insects, hornet harvesting is very dangerous and can even cause death. Therefore, it is very rare in the markets of other regions. The aim of this study was to examine the present use and the market potential of hornets by conducting a face-to-face interviews with local people including hunters, wholesalers, processors, retailers, and consumers. Results show that hornets are the most expensive edible insect, but depending on the size of the hornet, prices vary. It is collected from the deep forest by Larhu people who are skillful in hunting and know very well the nature of hornet. Collecting is seasonal, starting in August and ending in November. Hornets are sold on the market in various forms such as fresh alive, fried, or mixed with alcohol. Besides human consumption, hornets are also utilised as medicine. People believe that the mixture of alcohol with hornet can protect and cure strokes and inflammatory diseases. Depending on the form of the product, the collected amount of the hornets, market distance, location of the hunter's village, habits and economic condition of the villagers, and freshness of the hornets, six types of marketing chains can be distinguished. As hornet is rare and expensive, most of the locals are able to buy them only once per season. According to the wholesalers, almost 75 % of the hornets from Kyaingtone central market is transported to Mongla and Tachileik, borders areas of China, Laos, and Thailand, where 50 % of consumers are foreigners. Thus, hornet is a prospective product for earning foreign income, however, it is difficult to export hornet larvae alive legally. Therefore, commercial processing technologies in order to add value and export to neighbouring countries should be developed.

Keywords: Edible insects, entomophagy, ethnic groups