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Ntftp Certification Schemes in the Walnut Forests of Kyrgyzstan and Lessons Learned from Other Countries

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Abstract

The walnut-fruit forests on the Ferghana and Chatkal mountain ranges in Kyrgyzstan are considered as a global biodiversity hotspot, they also have the soil-protection and water regulating functions, and are the major source of income to the local households. Collection of walnuts and other NTFPs in Kyrgyzstan constitute an important basis for the local livelihoods. Previous studies recommended that the logistical and infrastructural improvement of the existing value-chains in accordance with the international sustainability standards might positively change the socio-economic welfare of the local livelihoods, and promote sustainable forest management to reduce deforestation. The NGOs and donor programs introduced the NTFP certification projects of the Fair Trade certification (in 2008) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) NTFP certification (in 2018) within the selected pilot communities of the walnut forests in Kyrgyzstan both aiming to improve the socio-economic welfare, sustainable forest utilisation and conservation of the walnut forests. However there is a limited understanding about the possible effects and impacts of these certification programs on the local livelihoods and the socio-ecological situation in the local forests.

The global experience has also shown that the collection, utilisation and trade of the NTFP products offers significant advantages to the national economies and the subsistence of the local livelihoods. NTFP certification was promoted since early 2000-s the NGOs and donor programs as a market-oriented tool to encourage sustainable extraction and commercialisation of non-timber forest products. It is important to analyse the current state of the art of the existing NTFP certification cases along with their success or failure factors, as well as other important contextual conditions.

The given study investigates the state of the art for NTFP certification in Kyrgyzstan based on the expert interviews, and compares the local situation with the existing experiences of similar certification schemes in other countries using the systematic literature review methods. The challenges and opportunities for the future of NTFP certification experiences in the country are described and further recommendations for policy- and decision-makers are provided.

Keywords: Kyrgyzstan, non-timber forest products, NTFP certification, walnut forests