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“Exploring opportunities ...
for managing natural resources and a better life for all”

Are non-timber forest products (NTFPs) the alternatives to overcome sustainable development challenges in Africa?

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Abstract

The number of people affected by hunger in the world increased to up to 828 million in 2021, an increase of around 46 million compared to 2020 and 150 million since the appearance of the covid-19 pandemic. This paper combines the results from our research activities and literature review to highlight, the potential role Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) could play to overcome sustainable development challenges in Africa. It has been found that, in the Sahelian region of Africa, 80 % of the households' incomes are derived from NTFPs. Moreover, more than 80 % of people in sub-Saharan Africa used directly NTFPs as drugs to treat illness. At country level, shea butter for instance, is Benin's third largest export product, with an estimated contribution to GDP of 1.23 %. In the country, support for honey production in the gazetted forests could generate a turnover of 80 million FCFA (140,000 US\$) / year. 1 ha of baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) established from 100 individual trees can annually sequester 72 t C equivalent at ± 190 t CO₂ that can be sold at USD 7600 on the carbon market; produce 500 kg pulp estimated at USD 25000/year and ± 150 L of seed oil/year also estimated at USD 25000/year. Based on the above, we assume that NTFPs can enhance livelihoods and resilience of smallholder farmers to climate change and at the same time help in mitigating climate change in sub Saharan Africa. It has been discussed in the paper the efforts to increase awareness on NTFPs health benefits, food and nutritional values, the utilisation of their products and the needs to create markets for healthy food products using technological improvement and innovation tools.

Keywords: Climate change mitigation, contribution to SDGs, livelihoods, NTFP