

7. Review of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) in Central Africa

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Early man's interaction with the forests was, for many years, almost exclusively centred on non-timber forest products (NTFPs), defined by most Central African countries national legislations and also by FAO as biological forestry products other than wood. This integrates plant product, fauna and aquatic products. Within Central Africa, NTFPs are exploited for subsistence needs and also for sale and are particularly important to rural communities in terms of food, nutritional requirements, medicines, fodder for livestock, related domestic requirements and socio-cultural issues. However the value, quantities and trade circuits are not known precisely. There is also a known trade (again, not yet quantified) out of Central Africa, which has been remarkably little studied. There is also little harmonisation or overview on a regional level on the state of NTFP, to ensure sustainable management of this sector. It is paradoxical that, in spite of their real and potential value, most NTFPs remain grouped as minor products of forests. These products rarely feature in statistics and are hardly studied or researched. This situation is due to lack of knowledge about the potential of NTFPs to support sustainable and remunerative enterprises. The main objective of this presentation is to give an overview of NTFP used in central African countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Republic of Congo) based on the work done by the ACP – FORENET project.

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