Non-Timber Forest Products in Lomié (Eastern Cameroon): utilisation, sustainability and potential income generation for the local population

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Introduction

The Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) is a global term indicating all the products from the forest, other than wood. However in certain cases, NTFP are also used for domestic uses. The studies of the CIFOR on the markets of the NTFP in the great urban centres in Central Africa, particularly in Cameroon shows a great margin profit by retailers (NDOYE 1995a, 1995b; NDOYE et al. 1998). It becomes then important to analyse whether Non-Timber Forest Products can bring substantial incomes to producers, especially in the remote areas where sources of income to local people are very limited. The present study describes various uses of NTFP in Lomié region and the sustainability of those uses, and discusses ways to show that trading in these products could be improved to contribute income generation for local populations.

Study area

The present study concerns the area of Lomié, East Province of Cameroon, located at about 300 km from Yaoundé, the capital city. This area is a humid tropical zone with an annual average temperature of 23.8 °C and an annual average rainfall of 1643 mm. It is a remote area with difficult accessibility. It is close to the Dja Wildlife Reserve (Fig. 1), a world heritage site.

Methodology

The methodology adopted to carry out this study involved social research and forestry inventory. The following steps were adopted:

- At village level: villagers in the area of Lomié were selected: RRA/PRA, direct observations and semi-structured interviews were used to collect informations. Interviews were focused on the following key groups: Baka pygmies and Bantu villagers, resource persons and representatives of local government.
- At market level: three markets were concerned with this study: Lomié, Abong-Mbang and Yaoundé markets. At this level, direct observations, structured and semi-structured interviews on retailers, hairdressers, representative of administrative institutions and workers of international organisations (NGOs) such as WWF and IUCN were carried out.
- At the forest level: forest inventory has been carried out to determine the density and production of the plants that produce NTFP, in order to appreciate the regeneration and the sustainability.

Results

4.1 NTFP from animal species: utilisation and income generation

The NTFP from animal species mostly enjoyed in Lomié region is the bush meat. Other animal products utilised in the area, but which play lesser role are catfish, fishes and honey (Fig. 2). The oil of moabi is produced from the seeds of the tree Baillonella toxisperma. The production of seed occurs once in every 3 years and it is very low (26.1 dry seeds/ha). The recorded regeneration was stopped as not enough.

| 4.3 Sustainability of the NTFP utilisation in the study area |

The density of the plants producing NTFP in the forest is very low. Long distance coupled with difficult access to the NTFPs makes the transport costs expensive. Based on direct observations and market analyses the following NTFP were identified as potentially important to generate income: oil of moabi (Baillonella toxisperma), wild mango (Irvingia gabunensis), Rattan and Kolanuts.

Discussion and Conclusions

Games offers good opportunities for income generation to the population of Lomié. The trade is very profitable. Almost all the household draw their incomes from this activity, which results in pressure on the resources within Dja Wildlife Reserve. Sustainable hunting methods and effective management of the faunal resources are urgently needed. The number of the traps has to go down. Those which are far, are to be given up and to be eliminated. (JEANPANT 1998) calculated, that 70 traps per hunter are enough in the region for conserving the game's daily needs (consumption).

It is also necessary to encourage law enforcement. The collecting of vegetative NTFP may be more sustainable. But its trade is still difficult, so that they contribute little to income generation for households. Only the oil of Baillonella toxisperma is being locally marketed but the marketing of this oil remains informal. There is a need to assist the villagers to provide them with information in order to formalise the marketing, which can contribute to the development of the market value of these products, and to get a fair credit to local population, for the establishment of small mills for the processing of oil and wild mango seeds in Lomié.

The regional markets from Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria and Gabon are to be explored. There, the demand of some NTFP is very high. Perhaps the efforts made were aimed at finding users among forestry methods, especially for cola trees.

Literature


