

« **Labelling, Standards and Certification issues for forest gathered food products** »

P. Vantomme and S. Walter

FAO, Forestry Department, Rome, Italy. emails : paul.vantomme@fao.org
sven.walter@fao.org

Abstract

Forest management certification is a market-based instrument to improve forest management. It is promoted with the goal to link trade to the sustainable management of the forest resource. The hope is that buyers will prefer certified products, which will encourage/force improved forest management and the protection of forest biodiversity. Some NWFP are already certified through one of the following certification schemes: Forest Management; Fair Trade initiatives, and Organic certification. Of those, the forest management certification schemes have elaborated so far the most comprehensive standards and which include technical, environmental and social issues. The internationally most known are: the Forest Stewardship Council – FSC; the Rainforest Alliance and SmartWood.

In principle, almost all NWFP could apply for organic certification when they are gathered in forests free of chemical treatments. Organic production systems mainly deal with the management of cultivated products, but also include wild crafted species. The *Basic standards for organic production and processing* of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements IFOAM, for example, include principles on the *Collection of non cultivated material of plant origin and honey*. Non-wood forest products can be accommodated under the IFOAM Organic Standards (version draft 2002): ‘2.4. Wild harvested products and common/public land management’. However, key issues for organic certification of wild gathered foods include: the wide dispersion of collectors; the limited knowledge to define sustainable harvesting levels; the unclear access to the resources and the conflicts among different user groups; the unknown market potential and insufficient product definition and classification.

Much work is still needed to further elaborate the standards for both forest management and for organic certification as to accommodate the specific technical, social and environmental requirements of gathering and producing NWFP. Particularly, the following issues still need further clarification in order to assess the relevance and applicability of organic certification of NWFP: suitability and collaboration among different certification programmes; costs; benefits and replicability.

Keywords: wild gathered food products, non-wood forest products, certification

1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide some clarifications regarding the different types of certification systems applicable to forests in general and to Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFP) in particular and to assess the potentials and risks of organic certification for wild gathered food products from forests.

What are forest foods?

Since immemorial times, people have gathered plant and animal resources in forests for their food, shelter and energy needs. Examples include edible nuts, mushrooms, fruits, herbs, spices, gums, aromatic plants, game, wood, fodder and plant or animal products for medicinal, cosmetic or cultural uses.

All our agriculture crops were once gathered in natural forests and open grasslands. Gradually, in the course of human history, these plants and animals were domesticated by farmers and became part of agriculture. This domestication process of important forest plant and animal species is still ongoing, as shown by recent and successful examples such as macadamia nuts (*Macadamia integrifolia*) or for fruits like star fruit (*Averrhoa carambola*) or durian (*Durio zibethinus*); as well as for animal species such as paca (*Agouti paca*) and iguanas (*Iguana iguana*) .

Since the early 1980's, the discussions about the fate of tropical forests were heating up as timber exploitation was perceived as being destructive to forests. Gradually more emphasis was given to the interests of forest dependent people and on the importance of the other than timber products obtained from these forests. The sustainable use of all forest plant and animal species is receiving more attention now as a means of mitigating deforestation, hence maintaining forest cover and preserving biodiversity, while at the same time realising income from it, particularly for forest-dependent people. "Non-wood forest products" (NWFP) and similar terms, like: "minor", "secondary", 'wild gathered', and "non-timber" forest products (NTFP), have emerged as umbrella expressions for the vast array of both animal and plant products other than wood (or timber in the case of "non-timber") derived from forests.

These terms were introduced to get this vast, but so far hidden or poorly known aspect of forest use to the surface and to facilitate a shift of focus towards the economies of forest-dependent peoples and as a way to stop forest destruction. As such it was hoped to encourage a more balanced management and utilisation of forest resources as to shift away from the prevalent industrial timber production focussed approach to forests. In this sense, any of those terms much more emphasises on the way the products were obtained rather than on specifying the type of product.

What is important is that, whatever term is used, it's scope and coverage must be well clarified and the terms need to be defined for the context of their use. The term "NWFP" will be used throughout this paper for reasons of consistency and clarity and does not imply any value judgement regarding to the other above described terms. NWFP are defined as goods of biological origin other than wood, derived from forests, other wooded land and trees outside forests (FAO 1999).

Although outside the scope of this paper, the essential requirement is that whatever term is used, it is backed by clear and globally applicable definitions, terms and subsequent product classification schemes. Clear definitions and terms on products in general and NWFP in particular are an essential prerequisite to elaborate and use reliable classification systems. These classification systems are the basis for compilation of production and trade statistics on NWFP in a country and for regional/global aggregation of trade data, and which are key inputs for policy and/or investment decisions.

Socio-economic importance of forest foods and trade statistics on NWFP

NWFP are of significance primarily in household and local economies. Several million households worldwide depend heavily on NWFP for subsistence and/or income. Some 80 percent of the population of the developing world use NWFP for health and nutritional needs. Women from poor households are generally those who rely more on NWFP for household use and income. This number is even larger if those who are seasonally dependent on NWFP

(e.g., livestock herders dependent on forest fodder/browse in the dry season, or displaced people due to famine or war conflicts) are considered.

NWFP are also used in many village-level, artisan and craft activities throughout the world. At a local level, NWFP also provide raw materials for large scale industrial processing for products such as foods and beverages, confectionery, flavourings, perfumes, medicines, paints or polishes.

Some NWFP are also important export commodities. At present, at least 150 NWFP are significant in terms of international trade. Most of these are exported in raw or semi-processed form. While most are traded in rather small quantities, some products do reach substantial levels, such as honey, gum Arabic, rattan, cork, forest nuts and mushrooms, essential oils, and pharmaceutical products (see Table 1). The figures on the value of international trade in NWFP are indicative only and should be used with caution.

Table 1: Value of Trade in Selected NWFP

Product	US\$ (million)
Plants used in pharmacy	689.9
Nuts	593.1
Ginseng roots	389.3
Essential oils	312.5
Natural honey	268.2
Mushrooms and truffles	210.7
Spices	175.7
Gum Arabic	101.3

Source: : **FAO**. 1993. International trade in non-wood forest products: An overview. by M. Iqbal, Working Paper Misc/93/11, Rome. Also available at www.fao.org/docrep/x5326e/x5326e00.htm

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimated that the total value of world trade in NWFP is on the order of US\$ 11 billion. The general direction of trade is from developing to developed countries, with about 60 percent being imported by countries of the EU, USA and Japan. China is the dominant world trader, but India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Brazil are also major suppliers to world markets.

2 Certification of non-wood forest products

Certification of NWFP is becoming a key issue in several international discussion fora on topics like sustainable forest management; conservation of Biological Diversity; and for the protection of the interests of forest dependent indigenous peoples and their knowledge. Although some existing certification schemes already are starting to certify specific NWFP, there are still a lot of misunderstandings on the objectives for certification of NWFP.

As for agricultural and/or timber products, certification mechanisms are used in order to monitor and evaluate the ecologically friendly, economically viable and/or socially equitable use of non-wood forest products. Criteria and indicators have been elaborated, against which production and commercialisation are assessed. The following certification schemes are becoming more relevant for NWFP:

- *Forest management certification* mainly assesses ecological aspects of resource management, both at the forest and species/product level. These schemes aim at ensuring the sustainable use of forest resources;
- *Social certification*, such as fair and ethical trade, assures that labour conditions are acceptable and benefits are equally shared among those involved in production and trade;
- *Organic certification* focuses on agricultural sustainability criteria such as the renunciation of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. Wild crafted and semi-domesticated NWFP can often be considered as organic and many NWFP such as pine nuts, mushrooms, herbs are increasingly commercialised as organic food products;
- *Product quality certification* aims at ensuring that defined production standards have been taken into consideration. These standards can focus on the product itself as well as on the way it is processed and manufactured.
- The “Certificate of Origin” is a widely used certification scheme for quality control of food products. The certificate only certifies that a given product is coming from a given region, or even a specific area. The most famous examples include the “D.O.C.” (Domination d’origine contrôlée) for wines and cheeses. Such systems are usually operated and monitored through a government-private sector consortium. Increasingly some high value edible NWFP, like truffles, morels and some wild mushrooms are certified through such documentation of origin systems; and which imply, according to the prestige of the place, a given standard of quality.

Social certification initiatives mainly include fair and ethical trade initiatives. Ethical trade initiatives aim at ensuring that core labour and human rights standards with relevance to workers are implemented. Fair trade is defined by the International Federation for Alternative Trade (2002) as "a trading partnership which aims at sustainable development for excluded and disadvantaged producers ... by providing better trading conditions, by awareness raising and by campaigning".

Certification of product quality properties mainly evaluates physical identity and chemical purity of raw materials, extracts and other transformed substances by applying, for example, microbiological and macro-analytical tests. Main parameters tested include

- product identity;
- products purity;
- product efficiency; and
- product safety.

These tests are applied for a wide range of internationally traded NWFP mainly used in the food and pharmaceutical industry. International commodity and general standards relevant for the food industry are for example formulated and harmonised by the Codex Alimentarius. The Codex Alimentarius Commission was established in 1962 by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and FAO to develop international food standards to protect consumer health and to facilitate fair trading practices in foods (FAO/WHO, 1999).

Product quality does not only refer to the product itself, but also to the way it is processed and manufactured. Standards such as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) or Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) aim at ensuring that processing has been done in a proper way in order to guarantee product quality.

This article emphasises on a review of the forest management certification schemes, because they are the closest to the issues dealing with the gathering of non-wood forest products and wild gathered foods. Also major social and environmental aspects of production and trade in NWFP are (partly already) covered under the forest management certification schemes and their related standards. Therefor the social certification (fair trade) as well as product quality labelling and certificate of origin schemes are not reviewed in this article.

3 Opportunities and constraints of existing forest certification schemes for certifying NWFP as organic

Forest management certification schemes : status and scope

As NWFP are gathered mainly (but not exclusively!) from forests, it is useful to provide here a more in-depth review of the present status and scope of the main forest management certification schemes.

Forest management certification and the associated issue of labelling its products is one of a number of market-based instruments to improve forest management and development. It is promoted for forest management and/or marketing reasons, with the goal to link trade to the sustainable management of the forest resource. The hope is that buyers will prefer certified products, which will encourage/force improved forest management and the protection of forest biodiversity. The focus of the forest management certification schemes is mainly on timber, as well as pulp and paper products.

The forest certification process starts with the elaboration/validation of the standard(s) of forest management; which cover economic, environmental, biological and social aspects. A (preferably independent, i.e. third party) certification body is then accredited to inspect the forest harvesting/management activities of the forest operator/harvester according to the selected standards. A chain of custody system may also be used to trace forest products through all levels of the processing/distribution chain, and specific label(s) can be authorised on the certified forest products for sale.

The current international situation of forest certification is a high profile subject; however it is still in its infancy and in a state of flux of continually changing, with new, revised certification processes ongoing and new forests being certified. Marketing and market access are the main reasons for the forest operators for being certified.

The area of forests certified is expanding globally but still an infinite percentage of world's total forests (<3%); and the same applies with the volumes of certified forest products traded. FAO estimates global area of certified forests at about 108 million ha. (exc. ISO-only certified areas); and of which 90-95 % are in temperate developed countries, largely Europe and North America, while little in tropical or developing countries. The distribution by continent of the estimated area of certified forests is Europe (59.1 million ha), North America (42.5); Latin America (4.6), Africa (1), Asia (0.2); and Oceania (0.6) (FAO 2002).

Table 2: Forest certifiers and certified areas

Certifier	Area certified (million ha)
The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)	27.8
Pan European Forest Certification (PEFC)	41.1
Canadian Standard Association (CSA)	8.8

Canada - ISO additional certification	91.8
American Forest & Paper Association (SFI)	20.4
American Tree Farm System	10

Source: FAO (2002)

In addition, there are national level initiatives such as the Indonesian Ecolabelling Institute (LEI) and the National Timber Certification Council (NTCC) of Malaysia and which have developed a national set of criteria and indicators for the auditing of forest management.

Little information is available on volumes of certified forest products traded for domestic or international markets. Volumes traded are increasing but remain still very small. Main demand for certified forest products comes from parts of Western Europe and the USA. There is little interest in Asia (includes major importers Japan and China) and Latin America – where limited interest is emerging slowly). Market demand is largely from retailers - not final consumers. Also there is little sign of price premium except for a few high-value segments. It is estimated that trade in certified forest products will increase but demand, or price premiums, are uncertain.

Current issues of key importance for and to forest certification at the international level include:

1. conflict between certification schemes, while interest in ensuring comparability (& acceptability) of different (inter- / national-) schemes is growing (e.g. mutual recognition, equivalency)
2. encouragement for developing countries for a stepwise approach to implement sustainable forest management (for example the use of certification in tracking illegal logging and trade in forest products)
3. their potential use for carbon sink monitoring and reporting.

The forest management certification programmes focus almost exclusively on timber products and include NWFP only marginally. However, some programmes and organisations such as the Forest Stewardship Council - FSC, the SmartWood Programme of the Rainforest Alliance and the Soil Association developed specific guidelines dealing with the management of NWFP.

The FSC is an international certification programme, which allows the usage of FSC labels on NWFP from certified forests on a case-by-case basis. According to the FSC board, forest management certification audits “should include more intensive evaluations of NWFP which are harvested for commercial sales, or where the non-commercial harvest of NWFP has important impacts. This should apply even when no NWFP will be labelled or endorsed by FSC” (Forest Stewardship Council United States, 2001).

The FSC established a NTFP working group, which developed a draft principle regarding the certification of NWFP. This *draft principle 11* is not endorsed by the FSC board or the FSC membership and is for discussion purposes only (Forest Stewardship Council United States, 2001).

At the moment, four food NWFP are certified by FSC:

- Maple syrup (*Acer saccharum*), certified in the USA in September 2000;

- Chicle (*Manilkara zapota*), certified in Mexico in 1999¹;
- Brazil nuts (*Bertholletia excelsa*), certified in Brazil, Bolivia and Peru. Peruvian brazil nuts were certified in March 2001; and
- Açai palm hearts and fruits (*Euterpe oleracea*), certified in Brazil in November 2000 (Donovan, 2000).

The Rainforest Alliance carries out various programmes and projects related to the certification of NWFP, such as the

- "NTFP Management, Marketing and Certification Programme", which is examining the conservation and development potential of NTFP certification;
- "Sustainable Botanicals Project", which aims at identifying effective strategies for the sustainable and ethical production and trade of plants (Pierce et al., 2002);
- "SmartWood Programme", which serves as an internationally recognised clearinghouse for information on sustainable forest management and certified wood products. SmartWood is accredited by FSC for natural forest management certification, plantation, NWFP and chain-of-custody certifications (SmartWood, 2002).

The Rainforest Alliance developed *Generic guidelines for assessing the management of NTFP in Natural Forests*, which have been tested by the WWF Mediterranean Programme for chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) in Greece and cork (*Quercus suber*) in Spain (Moussouris, 1999a; Moussouris, 1999b).

SmartWood, an FSC-accredited certifier, developed an *Addendum on NTFP*, which should be used by SmartWood Assessors, in combination with the *SmartWood Generic Guidelines for Assessing Forest Management*, in order to evaluate commercialised NWFP. The addendum should also be used as "a framework for the creation of additional NTFP species-specific checklists" (SmartWood, undated:1).

Organic certification of edible NWFP

In principle, almost all NWFP could apply for organic certification when they are gathered in forests free of chemical treatments (and which is the case for most forests).

Within any given forest, the potential supply of a NWFP is always rather limited not only because there are only a few specimens per area unit to harvest, but also because the harvesting technique and its intensity should not be detrimental to the survival of the species harvested. Therefor NWFP do rarely result in large volumes available for trade at the national or global level, comparable to volumes from agriculture crops such as cocoa or tea. As the supply of any edible NWFP is thus limited, the targeting of a niche market with a low volume demand for a product, but at a premium price, is a logical approach. Organic certification offers thus an ideal niche market option for commercialising forest gathered foods.

"Organic agriculture is a holistic production management systems which promotes and enhances agroecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity... Organic production systems are based on specific and precise standards of production, which aim at achieving optimal agro-ecosystems which are socially, ecologically and economically sustainable" (FAO/WHO, 1999). In reality, organic certification systems, however, mainly focus on agro-ecological sustainability criteria.

¹ Chicle, which is used for the production of a chewing gum called "JungleGum" is triple certified by FSC, Florida Organic Growers (organic farming) and Fair Trade e.V. (Wild Thinks. 2001).

Organic production systems mainly deal with the management of cultivated products, but also include wild crafted species. The *Basic standards for organic production and processing* of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements IFOAM, for example, include principles on the *Collection of non cultivated material of plant origin and honey*. Non-wood forest products can be accommodated under the IFOAM Organic Standards (version draft 2002): '2.4. Wild harvested products and common/public land management'; and which contains four standards:

- Wild harvested products shall only be certified organic if they are derived from a stable and sustainable growing environment. The people who harvest, gather, or wildcraft shall not take any products at a rate that exceeds the sustainable yield of the ecosystem, or threaten the existence of plant, fungal or animal species, including those not directly exploited.
- Operators shall harvest products only from a clearly defined area where prohibited substances have not been applied.
- The collection or harvest area shall be at an appropriate distance from conventional farming, pollution and contamination.
- The operator who manages the harvesting or gathering of common resource products shall be familiar with the defined collecting area.

In addition, but still as a « draft standard for discussion», the issue of certifying organic forest management is proposed under chapter 13. 'Forest Management ' and includes '13.5 Non Timber forest products' (however with the mention that this section will be moved to the Wild harvested products chapter in a future revision).

The IFOAM organic certification standards incorporate social (chapter 8 : Social Justice) and environmental aspects (chapter 2 : Organic ecosystems), i.e. assurances that the forest gatherers get a fair labour treatment and price for their products and that harvesting the resource should not cause its depletion or degradation of its habitat. However, these standards would need further specifications as to make them fully relevant to the issues of forest gathered foods. In addition, the technical basis as to assess the sustainability of harvesting of a forest food is still insufficiently known. The ecological knowledge of sustainable harvesting levels is very limited for most NWFP. Appropriate methodologies to define these sustainable harvesting yields are still rudimentary and will need to be more specific.

In addition to the IFOAM standards, NWFP are somehow, included in various other organic standards. Examples include

- Standards elaborated by IFOAM accredited certifiers such as the Florida Certified Organic Growers & Consumers Inc. (FOG), the Soil Association and the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA);
- Criteria for the production of agroforestry products (so called "Forest Garden Products) developed by the Forest Garden Initiative; and
- EU Council Regulation 2092/91 "on organic production of agricultural products and indications referring thereto on agricultural products and foodstuffs". This regulation considers "the collection of edible plants and parts thereof ['intended for human consumption', article 1, 1.(b)] growing naturally in natural areas, forests and agricultural areas [as an organic production method] provided that
 - those areas have received no treatments with products other than those referred to in Annex II for a period of three years before the collection.

- the collection does not affect the stability of the natural habitat or the maintenance of the species in the collection area" (EU Regulation 2092/91, annex 1, A.4).

In order to be recognised as organic products by standard owners such as IFOAM, wild harvested products generally have to meet the following criteria:

- An up-to-date *harvesting plan*;
- Clear record that no *prohibited substance* has been applied for at least three years immediately preceding harvest;
- the crop must be *harvested* in a manner that will sustain its growth and production and will not be destructive to the environment, including measures to avoid: depletion of population over time, soil erosion and adverse impacts on biodiversity;
- *harvesting areas* must be clearly defined with identifiable boundaries; and
- *buffer zones* must be delineated around the harvested area to avoid contamination from external sources (NTFP Demonstration Project, undated).

Organic certified NWFP include berries (Finland), palm hearts (Brazil), chicle (Mexico), maple syrup (USA), *Orbignya cohune* (Guatemala) as well as mushrooms, medicinal plants and cosmetics (Mallet, 2000; Viana et al., 1996; ten Kate and Laird, 1999). Certified Forest Garden Products are exploited in Sri Lanka, Philippines, Mexico, Ecuador (e.g. honey and *Paullinia cupana*/guarana), Costa Rica, Peru, Australia and Canada (Counterpart International, undated).

Issues and constraints for organic certification of NWFP

The information currently available shows that experiences and data on NWFP certification and organic certification for forest foods in particular are still limited. For many certification programmes, NWFP certification is still challenging since the specifics of NWFP certification in comparison to timber and cultivated products are not yet well analysed and documented. Since certification of NWFP only started recently, experiences in the procedure and the details of NWFP certification are still lacking (Mallet, 2000).

Most of the information on NWFP certification is provided by organisations, which are themselves directly involved in certification, be it as accreditation or certification bodies. Independent research on the potential and constraints of certification and benefit-sharing in the field of NWFP seems still to be embryonic, despite the existence of initiatives such as the certification programme of the Falls Brook Centre, the NTFP Exchange Programme, the Rogue Institute for Ecology and Economy, Tropenbos International and the NTFP Network for Sustainable Forest Management in the Mediterranean by the WWF Mediterranean Programme Office (Maas and Ros-Tonen, 2001). Most of these initiatives are focusing on specific regions such as North America, Asia and the Mediterranean region.

Key challenges for organic certification of wild gathered foods and other NWFP include:

- *Dispersion of collectors*: A specific problem related to the monitoring of NWFP utilisation is the dispersion of many NWFP collectors, who are often located in rural and isolated areas. It is therefore difficult to ensure that products are derived, according to given standards, from certified areas and not from uncertified areas (see also Viana et al., 1996).

- *Definition of sustainable harvesting levels:* The ecological knowledge of sustainable harvesting levels is very limited for most NWFP. Appropriate methodologies to define these sustainable harvesting yields are still rudimentary.
- *Creation of user conflicts:* The limitation of access to harvesting sites for different NWFP might create conflicts between different user groups.
- *Unclear market potential:* The actual demand for certified NWFP in the market is the driving force for many certification initiatives and a key to ensure economical viability. For many NWFP it is not yet proven that customers are willing to pay a higher *premium prices* for organic products. In the case of rattan, for example, the market for certified (including organic rattan) products “would be minimal unless a major public education effort took place to inform consumers of the negative impacts of many unsustainable rattan sources (Viana et al., 1996).
- *Insufficient product definition and classification:* Most NWFP are not yet included in international classification or standardisation systems such as the Harmonised System, Standard International Trade Classification, the Codex Alimentarius, etc. This insufficient coverage hinders international trade in these products as well as their documentation and regulation.

4 Conclusions

In principle, almost all NWFP could apply for organic certification when they are gathered in forests free of chemical treatments. In addition, available supply of NWFP (and even more so of certified NWFP) is still very limited and therefor the targeting of a niche market for organic products with a premium price is feasible.

However, much work is still needed to further elaborate the standards for both forest management and for organic certification as to accommodate the specific technical, social and environmental requirements of gathering and producing NWFP. Particularly, the following issues still need further clarification in order to assess the relevance and applicability of organic certification of NWFP:

- *Suitability of and collaboration among different certification programmes:* Which programme or arrangement is, under what conditions, the most suitable, and for whom? For example the wild foods gathered outside the forest, can not be certified according to forest management certification systems (see e.g. the *dehesa silvicultural* system in the case of cork [Moussouris, 1999a], or the gathering of wild herbs on grasslands). Therefore, the complementarity between forest management certification programmes and organic certification (wild gathering) has to be further strengthened as well as improving *Collaboration opportunities among different (forest) certification programmes*. Although different certification programmes focus on different issues related to the sustainable use of NWFP, they show however many commonalities, which might be used as a starting point for improved collaboration or mutual recognition. Field tests on palm heart production in Brazil, for example, were jointly carried out by FSC-accredited (IMAFLOA and SmartWood) and IFOAM-accredited (Instituto Biodinamico) organisations. The tests showed that both systems (forest management and organic farming certification) are complementary and no major contradiction in what was being assessed were identified (FSC NTFP Working Group, 1999).

- *Costs*: Certification requires up-front investments to cover costs related to the certification procedure as well as to the actual audit, which have to be financed by the stakeholders involved (by whom? the collectors, exporters or importers, retailers, consumers, etc.?). These costs might differ from various products, locations and certification programmes. Fair trade certification schemes, for example, require less investments since audit costs are already included in the premium guaranteed by the certifier. Organic implies lower costs than forest management certification; and might be more suitable to smallholder enterprises (and which are so characteristic for the NWFP sector).
- *Benefits*: What are the ecological, economic and social benefits actually derived from the use of certified NWFP? Does organic certification promote the sustainable use of NWFP, and if yes, to which extent?
- *Beneficiaries*: Who is actually benefiting from certifying NWFP? Many stakeholders such as collectors, intermediaries, processors, exporters and importers are involved in the trade in NWFP. Does organic certification ensure the adequate share of benefits, in particular for local communities? Is organic certification able to promote the production of NWFP by forest dependent people vis-à-vis the production of these products through (organic) farming systems?
- *Replicability/Mainstreaming*: How relevant is certification to promote the sustainable use of NWFP, taking into account that they are only applied for a limited number of products in specific locations? Can certification contribute to the sustainable use of many NWFP providing improved income and livelihoods for a significant number of people? What is the impact of organic certification on the bulk of NWFP used for self-consumption?

The FAO programme on Non-Wood Forest Products promotes the sustainable use of NWFP in contribution to sustainable and equitable Forestry Development, income generation and the protection of forest biodiversity. FAO sees ‘Certification’ as one tool that may assist in reaching the above goal. However, forest products certification has positive, negative and still some uncertain features, which needs further discussion and clarification among a wide range of interested stakeholders in the forestry and food sectors. To this end, FAO acts as a neutral forum, assists where it is seen as beneficial and provides unbiased information and advice.

For more information on FAO’s work on :

Non-Wood Forest Products : <http://www.fao.org/forestry/FOP/FOPW/NWFP/nwfp-e.stm>

Forest certification : <http://www.fao.org/forestry/fop/foph/trade/FCert-e.stm>

Organic agriculture : <http://www.fao.org/organicag/>

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