THE SOCIAL ROLE OF FORESTS: FOOD

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OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

1. “FORESTS”: ?, & biodiversity, Food
2. FOOD FROM FORESTS: ?, & dynamics
3. CHALLENGES of forest foods
4. FOOD FOR THOUGHT
1. “FORESTS: ?”

- what is a “forest” (for FAO): FRA
- 30% of earth’s terrestrial surface (4 billion ha) (1/3 “primary” forests! Deforest/degrad)
  460 m. ha designated for cons. of biodiversity
- lion share of animal & plant species (majority with still unknown (food) potential – tropical species)
- livelihood support (to approx. 300 million to 1 billion people) (80% of forests are public owned)
FAO definition of a “Forest”

• Land spanning more than 0.5 hectares with trees higher than 5 meters and a canopy cover of more than 10 percent, or trees able to reach these thresholds in situ.

It does not include land that is predominantly under agricultural or urban land use
2. FOOD FROM FORESTS: ?

• FOODS: nuts, fruits, mushrooms, bushmeat, edible insects, leaves, roots and tubers, honey / and used for food, spices, colorants, medicinals, herbs, fodder for livestock,..........

• Non-Wood Forest Products, NTFP’s, emerging-, underutilized-, uncultivated, indigenous-crops,..

• NWFP Global reported removal value: US$ 18.5 billion (underestimation) (eq. value of global apple production (FAOSTAT)
2. FOOD FROM FORESTS: characteristics & dynamics

• most farmed species originated from forests and have their origin still wild growing in the forests: f.ex.: apple, coffee, tea, ananas,...
  - importance of “wild” species for genetic improvement of farmed species
  - “domestication” process still ongoing! (particularly of tropical species) *Macadamia nuts, Theobroma grandiflora,*...

• direct food contribution + provides diversity in diets (proteins: bushmeat, edible insects, fish,.../ vitamins: fruits, leaves,.../ fats: nuts,...)

• Forests and trees provide *indirect* protection of farmland & water supplies
3. FOOD FROM FORESTS: Major challenges

- majority produced from gathering/hunting on “public”-owned lands ( “tragedy of commons” - leads to species depletion (large fauna spp./flora: medicinal plants)
- conflicts among forest user stake holders: “timber – versus food” (ex.: sapelli wood versus edible caterpillars: logging companies versus indigenous peoples)
- fragmentation of NWFP production, + local importance
- poor institutional, legal, policy and regulamentory framework (most of production/sector is “informal” and for subsistence use)
- low technological level and limited value added by producers
- indigenous knowledge and practices are disappearing ( deforestation, rural exodus, changing food habits,.....)
4. FOOD FOR THOUGHT

• need for awareness raising (Forestry depart. : “Forests are more then just wood” !)

• need for cross-sectorial approach when developing edible NWFP (involvement of Forestry, Agriculture, Nutrition, Health, Trade,...)

• improve/ adjust technical skills and indigenous knowledge base (incl. nutritional data of forest foods)

• adjust policy/ legal/ regulamentary frameworks governing production and trade of forest foods with a more “pro poor” focus
Activities by FAO Forestry Deprt.

• **awareness** raising on the contribution of forests to food security (direct + indirect)

• improving **technical knowledge** on major edible NWFP (honey, mushrooms, edible insects, nuts, ...) and topics (domestication, assessment, adding more value, enterprise development,...)

• support to **institutional capacity** of member country’s forestry agencies, curriculum devel

• improving related **Policy and regulatory framework**

• technical assistance (**field projects**)