



National Strategy on Non-Wood Forest Product Sector of Republic of Kosovo

BACKGROUND The Republic of Kosovo is located in the central Balkan Peninsula, and is rich in plant diversity determined by the geographical position, relief configuration (different altitudes and micro-climates), and climate conditions. A large number of endemic and steno-endemic plants are important natural resources. Based on a non-wood forest products (NWFP) inventory, 84 species of commercial importance have been identified with potential to produce almost 29.000 tonnes of dried raw material annually. The Sharri Mountains and the Albanian Alps are the richest regions in Kosovo in terms of NWFPs. Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, Common Juniper *Juniperus communis* and Cowslip *Primula veris*, species important and valuable in the international markets, dominate in these regions especially in the sub-alpine zone.

The sustainable exploitation of wild plant resources in the NWFP sector in Kosovo and its impact on rural economic development is not considered to be sustainable for a number of reasons, including:

- insufficient legal framework;
- lack of studies on resource assessment capacity and management plans;
- low level of public awareness and knowledge on the importance of sustainable wild collection for rural income generation;
- lack of registered operators and collectors;
- unclear forest ownership;
- small number of licensed companies and permits for NWFP;
- selling of products as raw materials at very low prices; and
- small number of processing industries and exporters.

NON-WOOD FOREST PRODUCTS STRATEGY In order to strengthen the regulatory and institutional framework, to increase the level of public awareness on the role of NWFPs in rural income generation and to address other challenges listed above, development of a *National Strategy for the NWFP sector* has been requested by the private sector and with consent of the General Secretaries of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD) and Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP). The preparation of the National Strategy 2014-2020 (hereafter ‘the Strategy’) was supported by the GIZ project ‘Enhancement of the competitiveness of the private sector in Kosovo’.

The Strategy aims to increase the contribution of the NWFP sector to the rural income generation, and thus the national economy, through sustainable use, focusing on the multi-functional role of forestry. The Strategy focuses on protection and exploitation of natural resources, rural economic development and poverty reduction, improvement of infrastructure and living conditions, and strengthening the national legislation and its approximation with EU frameworks.

FAIRWILD AS A BASIS FOR POLICY FRAMEWORKS The application of the laws and secondary legislation regulating the collection of NWFP in accordance with international guidelines and management standards, such as Good Agricultural and Collection Practices (GACP) and FairWild Standard (FWS) is foreseen in the Strategy’s Action Plan. The implementation of GACP and FWS will serve as a base for harvesting, collecting, processing and trading NWFPs. Respecting sustainable harvesting principles and protecting the biodiversity will also create income for the rural population and ensure the consistency with the Millennium Development Goals.



Cowslip *Primula veris*,
CREDIT: Corvinus University/
Peter Radacsi



Common Juniper *Juniperus communis*, CREDIT: Corvinus University/Peter Radacsi



Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*,
CREDIT: Corvinus University/
Peter Radacsi

Specifically, the Strategy includes sustainable resource management and use, and management and product documentation carried out according to FWS and its principles. The policy will encourage the use of NWFP through integrated management of forests following the principles of sustainable utilization of all types of NWFP, including the precautionary principle, the principle of inter-generational equity, conservation of biological diversity and ecologically sustainable development.

FRAMEWORK AND GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The framework for the implementation of Kosovo's NWFP strategy 2014-2020 is based on three pillars:

Tailor-made projects to raise knowledge in underdeveloped competence areas.

The planned activities include organization of a pre-university vocational education for forestry profile, development of a sustainable training system for NWFP activities, creation of opportunities for running or attending higher NWFP education, and others.

Support to operations performance and turn-around actions (resource use and management).

Resource owners: The planned activities will include identification of collection areas, herbarium sampling and botanical identification, resource assessment and management plans, control/inspections, issue of licences/permits;

Resource users: The planned activities will include technical planning of collection, development of a collectors manual (organic certification/FairWild), costing and documentation (internal control system), introduction to the sustainable wild collection (FairWild principles), quality control and administration, audit and certification (e.g. EU organic, FairWild, NOP).

Support to the government institutions having the overall responsibility for implementing the strategies (Resource Planning & Private sector development).

The planned activities include promotion of the establishment of associations representing the interest of various stakeholder groups, creation of possibilities for the private sector to undertake management of public forestlands and initiation of land consolidation processes.

FUTURE IMPACT The implementation of the Strategy 2014-2020 will formalize the sector by the harmonization of legislation with international legislation requirements and guidelines, protection and sustainable use of NWFP resources, implementation of international standards and institutional development. Furthermore the Strategy leads to an improvement of transparency of the NWFP sector. Measures to be taken for implementation include collectors' registration, the issuance of collection permits and licences, implementation of a resource assessment and annual resource monitoring. Communicating the principles of sustainable wild collection at collectors', companies' and resource owners' side including good collection practices, sustainable management practices, as well as pre-, harvest and post-harvest processes raises public awareness on sustainable use of NWFP and on the potential of wild collection as rural income generation in Kosovo. This will be implemented through regular trainings on GACP and the FWS for resource owners, resource users and state inspectors. Homogenization of processes and a possible FairWild certification opens the possibilities for value addition which moreover can lead to expansion of the production into the European Market in general and especially in niche markets for sustainably sourced products.



FAIRWILD TRAINING

In November 2014, a training session in FairWild Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) was conducted in the context of a GIZ-supported programme for sustainable wild-collection in Kosovo. Subjects covered the procedures for resource assessment and resource management by resource owners and users, including field training in transects for resource measurement. Participants took a training exam on the last day.



A FairWild training in Kosovo, CREDIT: <http://www.in2ni.com/kosovo/>



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