

## **NCCF Non-Wood Forest Resource (NWFR) Certification Initiative**

**Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests**, a not for profit organisation of India, is actively promoting sustainable management of natural resources and sustainable consumerism through the mechanism of certification. We have developed/are developing globally benchmarked and India specific sustainability standards for various constituents of our natural resource base, as our core activity, besides engaged in policy advocacy, awareness raising and capacity building.

### **Introduction**

India is 10<sup>th</sup> most forested country in the world. With an area of 80.73 MHa, some 24.56% of country's geographical area is under forest and tree cover. These areas are source of bulk of the non-wood forest products. We are aware about plenty of extraction of NWFPs from the Non wood Forest Resources, some are within sustainable limits and some are not. There is growing interest worldwide in India's natural wild food products, traditional medicines and herbs, handicrafts, etc.

### **Classification**

Classification of NWFPs is under two categories: Plant origin and Non-plant or animal origin.

### **Utility**

Standard for Non-Wood Forest Resources (NWFR) is being developed by NCCF is to benefit forest dwellers and local communities for whom extraction (collection/harvest) of NWFPs is an important source of livelihood. Moreover, commercial opportunities for NWFRs are emerging and certification can help and promote their marketing, ease of trade and facilitate market linkage while ensuring sustainability of NWFRs.

### **Major Challenges in Sector**

- There is no mechanism to decide limits and thresholds values for different NWFPs (plant and animal origin) to ensure resource sustainability.
- Collection/Extraction of NWFPs is largely unorganized and unrecorded except for some specified NWFPs
- There is no proper mechanism for benefit-sharing with the forest dwellers, local communities and others involved in collection/extraction of NWFPs
- Lack of effective channels to ensure use and practice traditional knowledge in management of forest resources and its documentation
- Absence of standardization of package of practices for harvesting/collection and primary processing of most NWFPs
- NWFP market is highly unorganized and demand side is also unaware of their availability, and even use of several NWFPs
- Primary processing of NWFPs takes place at household level and in small scale units mainly outside established marketing systems/channels
- Absence of mechanism for tracking and traceability for NWFP products and resources

Currently, there is no exclusive functional internationally recognized NWFR certification scheme in the country. Few NWFPs are getting certified under 'organic certification' and some medicinal plant products are certified under QCI-AYUSH certification scheme.

### **Benefits**

NWFP certification scheme will provide benefits to the entire value chain, either directly or indirectly. Certification can provide both non-financial and financial incentives to improve environmental, social, management and economic performance as proved world over including India. It also dovetails with the country's various national and international commitments in field of forestry and climate change. Some key benefits are mentioned below:

**Economic Benefits:** NWFP certification will ensure standardization of local value addition to forest-based products, improved marketing strategies, product positioning & visibility. It will enhance brand equity of and ensure higher credibility to organization.

**Environmental Benefits:** NWFP certification will help to conserve biological diversity and maintain ecological functions and integrity of forests along with conservation of rare, threatened and endangered species.

**Social Benefits:** NWFP certification will ensure that rights of local & forest-dwelling communities and forest workers are respected. It helps in maintenance of social equity, wages, equal remuneration, non-discrimination, benefits, compensation, etc. It will also assert in percolation of monetary benefits down to the grass-root level and primary collectors, compliance with ABS guidelines, etc.

**Management Benefits:** Certification being independent third-party evaluation adds value to findings of periodic monitoring which helps to keep a check on all desired outcomes from management activities.

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