

A study on commercial uses of forest produces in Karbi Anglong district of Assam

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Abstract

Forest and its resources have been tremendous importance to human. Forest is intimately linked to our culture and civilization. It has an important role in regions, states and nations. The economics of the regions are positively or negatively affected by this important resource. A relatively less developed district like Karbi Anglong in Assam is totally dependent on its forest resources. Forest is the backbone of its economy. The welfare of the population is directly or indirectly affected by the commercial exploitation of forest resources. The ethnic culture of the indigenous people reflects a close interaction with forest and the products it offers. The study is descriptive in nature and the primary data has been collected through field survey and direct personal interview.

Keywords: forest produces, indigenous people, economy, commercial uses

Introduction

A forest product is any material derived from a forest for commercial use, such as timber, paper or forage for livestock. Wood by far the dominant commercial product is used for many industrial purposes, such as the finished structural material for the construction of buildings, or as raw materials, in the form of wood pulp, that is used in the production of paper. All other non-wood products derived from forest resources, comprising a broad variety of other forest products are collectively described as non-timber a forest product, which are medicinal plants herbs, fungi, edible fruits, nuts and other forest products. Forests play an important role in the socio-economic development of a country like India. The India forests provide a lot of direct benefit to people who are living in and around it. According to the Government of India (1999), the forest nearly meets 40% of the country's energy needs. Wood can be considered as the main source of fuel in rural areas of India with providing more than 60% of the energy requirements (Pandey, 2002)^[5].

In Karbi Anglong District, many forest products like bamboo, wood, medicinal plants, timber, reema, cane, etc are commercially important species. The products are widely distributed in the area where the rural people are mostly dependent in this type of product. The rural people prefer to sell their products daily, weekly or monthly. The forest division is entrusted with the overall task of protection and management of forests. They carry out extraction of timber and other products and earn revenue for the council exchequer. The forest products are mainly depended by the rural people and especially to the rural poor as it provides additional income through collection and marketing of different forest produces. Within the overall set of the forest produces the vast majority of species product is consumed directly by the people that collect them and traded in small quantities.

The paper is presented in different sub heads and divided into

five parts-the first part of the paper gives an outline of the paper including introduction, relevance of the study & objective of the study. The second part presents the research designs which have been followed and the third part deals with the review of literature. The fourth part presents the findings which are followed by conclusion & suggestions in the last part.

Relevance of the study

Forest and commerce is an inseparable as man and his environment. Forest has always been fulfilling our need since we evolved from an ape like animal. Even in today's time of technological advancement, our dependence on forest is linked to our own survival as a species. If we are to understand commerce in its present form we must analyze its various stages. One of the better ways to do it is by studying the commercial uses of forest product in the developmental activities of a place which is comparatively less developed. Karbi Anglong District of Assam is one such area of study where developmental activities are at its nascent stage. Forestry in Karbi Anglong District is a significant rural industry. Local people in the District still follow the traditional way of earning their income. Forest products are being sold in the market daily, weekly or monthly by the local community. Forest is found in abundance in Karbi Anglong and the role it plays in the economy presents an ideal case for critical study of man's conflict with environment.

Objective of the study

The present research has been undertaken with the following objectives:

- To analyze the role played by forest in promotion of rural economy.
- To examine the commercial exploitation of forest products for derives ways for value addition.

Research Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature and is based on primary data and secondary data. The primary data has been collected through field survey and direct personal interview of the respondents who include people dependent on forest resources and officials of the forest department. The main research instrument to obtain information and collect data was with the help of framed schedule. The study was based upon 40 samples comprising the randomly selected people from different ethnic background dealing in forest related resources.

Review of Literature

A highlight of some research works that were being reviewed before undertaking the present study is as follows:

Chowdhury (1996) [2] in his book define about various forest resources and industry available in the North-East India. He also study about the economic conditions and economic history of this region.

Kar & Borthakur (2006) [4] have study about the 29 wild vegetables that are sold in local markets and how its contribution has a great role towards the rural economy. They found that the wild vegetables have huge prospects in the local market but some of the plants are depleted in wild conditions due to over exploitation and habitat destruction.

According to Sharma, *et.al.*, (2015) [6] a large number of people of Arunachal Pradesh are dependent on NTFPs for their livelihood however due to its unscientific harvesting, the availability of NTFPs is receding with time.

The Forest Office of Karbi Anglong District conducted a study the achievement of the department of environment and forest for identifying and finding the measures of preserving the local species.

Findings

Monthly income pattern of the respondents

The monthly income of the people in the district is greatly influence by the trade relating to forest and its products. For the conduct of the study, 40 respondents were distributed on the basis of the monthly income from selling the forest products. The distribution is given as follows:

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their monthly income:

Monthly Income	No. of respondents	Percentage
Below 5000	12	30%
Rs 5001 to Rs 10000	18	45%
Rs 10001 and above	10	25%
Total	40	100%

Source: Self Compilation from field survey.

The table reveals that 45% respondents, monthly income from the forest products is Rs 5001 to Rs 10000, 30% income is below Rs 5000 and 25% has monthly income above Rs 10000. Thus, majority of the respondent monthly income is between Rs 5001 to Rs 10000 which shows that the local people have moderate rate of earning from the forest products.

Educational Qualification of the respondents

The literacy rate of the district is relatively less when compared other districts of the state. Under the study, the 40

respondents were categorized on the basis of differences in their educational qualification. The following table shows the distribution of the respondents on the basis of their educational qualification:

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to the educational qualification:

Educational Qualification	No. of respondents	Percentage
Below Metric	25	62.50%
Metric Pass	8	20.00%
H.S. Pass	4	10.00%
Graduation & above	3	07.50%
Total	40	100%

Source: Self compilation from field survey.

The above table reveals that 62.50% of the respondents are qualified below metric level, 20% of the respondents are matriculate, 10% are H.S. Passed and only 7.50% are above graduate.

Thus, it indicates that mostly less educated people are engaged and dependent on the forest products.

Commercial uses of different forest products by the respondents:

Forest Products are put into various commercial uses based on their utility and value in the market. Under the study, the 40 respondents were distributed according to various forest products which are use for commercial purpose or the products outside of Karbi Anglong.

The following Table shows the distribution of the respondents on the basis of engagement of various forest products in commercialization:

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to various commercial uses of the forest products:

Name of the product	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Timber	8	20.00%
Cane	9	22.50%
Bamboo	11	27.50%
Reema	7	17.50%
Medicinal Plants	3	07.50%
Other Products	2	03.50%
Total	40	100%

Source: Self Compilation from field survey.

The table shows that, out of 40 respondents, 27.50% respondents use bamboo product commercially, 22.50% of the respondents use cane product commercially, 20.00% of the respondents use timber product commercially, 17.50% of the respondents use reema product commercially, 7.50% of the respondents use medicinal plants commercially and only 5.00% of the respondents use other products for commercial purpose.

This indicates that majority of the respondents use bamboo product more commercially. Perhaps this may be because of the more demand of the bamboo product in the market.

Rural people dependent upon the forest product

The services provided by the forest in sustaining the livelihood of the people are in comparable. Forest is still the

direct and indirect source of income for the large portion of the population. Under the study, the 40 respondents were distributed according to the rural people who are dependent upon the forest product. The table shows the distribution of the respondents on the basis of the rural people who are dependent upon the forest product.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents according to the dependent of the rural people upon forest products:

Rural People Dependence	No. of respondents	Percentage
Fully Dependent	33	82.50%
Partially Dependent	7	17.50%
Total	40	100.00%

Source: Self compilation from field survey.

The above table shows that 82.50% of the rural people of Karbi Anglong district are fully dependent in forest product in earning their livelihood and the remaining 17.50% are mixed up with other things. Thus, it indicates that still now the rural people are following the traditional method in earning their livelihood or it might be because of the illiteracy of the rural people.

Mode of transport used by the respondents in selling the forest product:

The mode of transportation is relatively underdeveloped in the district. Under the study the 40 respondents were distributed

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to selling of products:

Selling of Product	No. of respondents	Percentage
By self in local market	20	50.00%
Through local traders	17	42.50%
Through authorized dealer	3	07.50%
Total	40	100.00%

Source: Self Compilation from field survey.

The table reveals that 50.00% of respondents sell their products by their own in the local market, 42.50% shows that the products are sold through agency or brokers whereas, 7.5% of the respondents sell their products through authorized dealer.

Thus majority of the respondents prefer selling the products by their own. The reason might be they don't have any

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to the frequency of selling:

Frequency of Selling	No. of respondents	Percentage
7 days	9	22.50%
10 days	7	17.50%
15 days or above	24	60.00%
Total	40	100.00%

Source: Self Compilation from field survey.

The table shows that 60% of respondents sell their products at interval of 15 days or above. 22.50% of the respondents sell their products at an interval of 7 days and only 17.5% sell their products at an interval of 10 days. Thus, majority of the respondents sell their products at an interval of 15 or more days. The reason might be convenience

on the mode of transport used for carrying the products to the market. The distribution is as follows:

Table 5: Distribution of the respondents according to mode of transport used:

Mode of transport	No. of respondents	Percentage
Thela	8	20.00%
Bicycle	10	22.00%
Tempo/Van	15	37.50%
Truck	7	17.50%
Total	40	100.00%

Source: Self compilation from field survey.

The table shows that 37.50% of the respondents use tempo/van to transport their products to the market, 22.00% use bicycle to transport their product, 20.00% use thela to transport their product and 17.50% use truck. Thus, majority of the respondents use bicycle to carry their products to the market, as it is convenient to carry relatively higher/bulk quantities of the product.

Selling of forest product by the respondents:

The trading of their forest related products are done largely in the local market. The demand for this item is mostly domestic in nature. Other products with the potential of further value additions are sent outside the district. Under the study the 40 respondents were distributed on the basis of where and how they sell their products. The distribution is given as follows:

adequate facilities by the government.

Frequency of Selling

The pattern of their trade is largely governed by the necessity for cash and availability of forest product. Under the study the 40 respondents were categorized on the basis of the frequency of selling their products. The distribution is shown as follows:

in storing and selling.

Problem encountered by the respondents

The difficulties encountered in the commercial exploitation of forest products can be attributed to various factors ranging from insurgency to lack of adequate infrastructure. Under the

study, the 40 respondents were distributed according to the business problems faced by the respondents. The distribution

is shown as follows:

Table 8: Distribution according to the problems encountered by the respondents:

Business problems faced by respondents	No. of respondents	Percentage
Finance	11	27.50%
Markets	8	20.00%
Tools and Equipments	9	22.50%
Inputs	8	20.00%
Others	4	10.00%
Total	40	100.00%

Source: Self compilation from field survey.

The table reveals that 27.50% of the respondents found finance as business problems, 22.50% of respondents found tools and equipments as the business problems, 20% of the respondents found markets as business and similarly another 20% of the respondents found inputs as their business problems and the rest only 4% of the respondents found other reason in their business problems.

The lack of support from the government is fairly evident responses of the large group of respondents who have enlisted lack of finances and market as their area of concern.

Forest revenue earned by the District Autonomous Council

The forest resources are under the district control of the District Autonomous Council. It collects forest revenues through the imposition of royalties, taxes and direct selling of its forest resources. The following are data of the forest revenue earned by the District Autonomous Council per year in the district:

Table 9: Table showing Forest Revenue earned by the District Autonomous Council.

Year	Forest Revenue (in Rs)
2009-2010	93,42,000
2010-2011	1,78,50,223
2011-2012	4,21,07,966

Source: Data collected from forest office.

The above data shows that in the year 2011-2012, the District Council of Karbi Anglong District Council earned Rs 4,21,07,966, whereas in the year 2010-2011 it was Rs 1,78,50,223 and in the year 2009-2010 the forest revenue stood at 93,42,000.

The above figures shows that the revenues received from the forest resources constitute a major portion of the District Council earnings. The gradual increase in revenues can be attributed to the increasing exploitation of forest resources every year.

Conclusion & Suggestions

Karbi Anglong is the largest district of Assam and largely covered with forest areas. The district is relatively less developed as compared to other district of the state. Illiteracy is still a major challenge and industrialization is negligible. A major portion of the population still deals in wild forest products and other forest related activities for sustaining their livelihood. The vast forest resources are being commercially

exploited to meet developmental needs. The emerging competitive market for forest resources and its ever increasing commercial uses have put a lot of stress on the available resources. The District Autonomous Council which derives a major chunk of its revenue from forest resources is encouraging major exploration and exploitation activities. The forest related products can even play a major role in increasing the purchasing power of the rural tribal population of the district and steps should be taken to ensure that they get a fair price in the market by introducing minimum support price. Forest is nature most beautiful and versatile renewable resource, providing simultaneously a wide range of economic, social environmental and cultural benefits and services. At the same time, forests are home to the world’s poorest people.

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