



Practice of market price information system (MPIS) of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in Nepal

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Abstract

Normally, demand and supply function determines the price of goods which is monitored and finalized by the government or concerned authority. There is certain formal process of price determination and final price list is either published in online media or print media or displayed publically in notice board. The aim of this study was to identify the practice of market price information system of non-timber forest products in Nepal. The study was conducted in three geographic areas: High Mountain, Hill and Plain area comprising one district from each area. Total 466 usufructs were randomly selected for questionnaire survey and in-depth interview. The study was based on the cross-section descriptive design. The study found that the practice of price fixing and use of market price information system was very informal; people used to collect the information from one to one contact. Some of the organizations related to NTFPs have practiced to display the price list in website but very few visited the website for information because of the lack of trustworthiness in given information so concerned authority should ensure the reliability of information published in online media or displayed in notice board. Income of NTFPs was satisfactory. Usufructs can earn more if MPIS will be more effective.

Keywords: Market price Information System, Nepal, Non-timber Forest Product, Practice.

Introduction

Generally, market price of any goods is determined by the demand and supply factors; quantity and quality of production on the one hand and other hand, no. of consumers and purchasing capacity of consumer determines the price of goods. Non-timber forest product is the one of the more reliable source of income of rural people of Nepal. In Nepal, forest cover is about 39.6 percent of the total landmass and contributes 14 percent in GDP¹. The country is domicile of 35 types of the global forest types, about 7000 vascular plants of which more than 700 are known to be medicinal and aromatic plants². Basically, rural community people collect and sell the forest products because of the growing demand of it national and international market. It has direct contribution in improving livelihood of local communities so there is need of sustainable management of harvesting of natural product.

Various previous literatures have also explored the contribution of forest in social and economic development of people of developing countries who are living close to the forest and whose occupation is dominated by subsistence agriculture. Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) play vital role among the rural people by providing the opportunity of source of income and subsistence living^{3,4}. There are various types of non-timber forest products available in Nepalese forest which is sold in market for the different purpose. According to the Sharmah, Adhikary, Majumdar, and Arunachalam⁵, fuel-wood, medicinal

plants, wild edible vegetables, house building materials etc are NTFPs which are integral part of day-to-day livelihood activities of rural people.

Since the early 1990s, NTFP has been playing the significant role in poverty alleviation. With the increased importance of NTFP, concerned organization has also increased attention towards the sustainable forest use³. Long term benefit of NTFP is directly related with the sustainable management of forest and forest product. Nepalese forest users are also gradually becoming the conscious about the sustainable use of forest and forest products. As the statement of Gupta and Gularia⁶ and FAO⁷, all direct and indirect beneficiaries have well recognized the socio-economic importance and the value of NTFPs in change of livelihood. In almost all tropical countries, the collection of NTFPs is a major economic activity⁸⁻¹¹ and about 500 million people living in or near forests being depended upon them for meeting their livelihood needs¹².

Non-Timber Forest Products is an important source of livelihood for the millions of people from forest fringe communities across the world. There is no availability of latest data of contribution of NTFP in GDP but it might be increased in amount of contribution in GDP. Information is power to take any decision which has played the significant role to empower the usufructs also to determine the price of their non-timber forest products. The main interest of this study is to identify the current practice of market price information system of non-

timber forest products in Dolpa, Salyan and Banke districts of Nepal. These districts are located in the three different layers: High Mountain, Hill and Plain areas of same region.

Materials and methods

The study had administered the structured questionnaire survey and key informants interview also following the mixed method design. Household survey was done to collect the data. The study had selected 466 usufructs from Dolpa, Salyan and Banke districts of Nepal by using the simple random sampling techniques. The study visited the community forest users groups and took their permission before taking interview with beneficiaries of forests. The collected quantitative data are analyzed through the statistical software and qualitative data are presented in narrative form. The findings of both data are merged and derived the conclusion.

Results and discussion

Currently practice of fixing price of NTFPs: Table-1 shows the current practice of how the price of the NTFPs been fixed. Majority of the respondents said the price is being fixed by negotiation between buyer and seller (60.1%) followed by “from processing center (36.7%), 1.7 percent of the respondents said that they fixed the price by MPIS of Jadibuti Association of Nepal (JABAN) and Asian Network on Sustainable Agriculture and Bio-resources (ANSAB) and 1.3 percent of the respondents

do not know how they fixed the price of the NTFPs. Regarding Banke district, 93.3 percent of the respondents said the price has been fixed by negotiation where 5.0 percent and 2.8 percent of the respondents reported that they the price was been fixed from processing center and MPIS respectively. Similar pattern was seen at both Salyan and Dolpa districts also.

While seeing on the basis of types of respondents, 61.6 percent of the CFUG respondents said they fixed the price by negotiation followed by “from processing center” (36.7%) and negligible number of the respondents reported “MPIS of Jadibuti Association of Nepal (JABAN) and Asian Network on Sustainable Agriculture and Bio-resources (ANSAB)” and other sources. On the other hand among retailers the methods was been distributed on similar proportion. Majority of the retailer respondents, 37.5 percent of the respondents reported the price was been fixed “from processing center” followed by MPIS of Jadibuti Association of Nepal (31.3%), “negotiation (18.8%) and 12.5 said “don’t know”.

Similarly, majority 69.1 percent of the female respondents said “negotiation” and 55.1 percent of the male respondents said same. Only 2 percent of the male and 1.2 percent of the female respondents said the price of the NTFPs was been fixed by MPIS of Jadibuti Association of Nepal (JABAN) and Asian Network on Sustainable Agriculture and Bio-resources (ANSAB).

Table-1: Currently practice of fixing price of NTFPs.

		District			Total	Type of respondent		Total	Gender		Total
		Banke	Salyan	Dolpa		CFUG Member	Retailer		Female	Male	
MPIS of JABAN /ANSAB	N	5	2	1	8	3	5	8	2	6	8
	%	2.8%	.7%	6.3%	1.7%	.7%	31.3%	1.7%	1.2%	2.0%	1.7%
Negotiation	N	168	102	10	280	277	3	280	114	166	280
	%	93.3%	37.8%	62.5%	60.1%	61.6%	18.8%	60.1%	69.1%	55.1%	60.1%
From processing center	N	7	162	2	171	165	6	171	45	126	171
	%	3.9%	60.0%	12.5%	36.7%	36.7%	37.5%	36.7%	27.3%	41.9%	36.7%
From NGOs	N	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1
	%	0.0%	.4%	0.0%	.2%	.2%	0.0%	.2%	.6%	0.0%	.2%
Don't know	N	0	3	3	6	4	2	6	3	3	6
	%	0.0%	1.1%	18.8%	1.3%	.9%	12.5%	1.3%	1.8%	1.0%	1.3%
Total	N	180	270	16	466	450	16	466	165	301	466
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The study has indicated that the process of finalizing the price of non-timber forest product was more informal. More than 60% usufructs reported that they were being decided the price from the negotiation between sellers and buyers. Very few (less than 2%) reported that they had used the MPIS of offices of Jadibuti Association of Nepal (JABAN) and Asian Network on Sustainable Agriculture and Bio-resources (ANSAB). The study discussed with usufructs to know the reasons of not accessing the formal channel to collect the information. They stated that main reason was not easy access on authentic office and website of NTFP. The study showed that in total, 15% usufructs were illiterate whereas 28.9% were just literate which was directly affecting to access the website and other notice board of NTFPs.

Way to connect with Producer/seller/buyers: Table-2 shows the practice of connecting producer/sellers/buyers for the trade of NTFPs. 47 percent of the respondents connect with producer/sellers/buyers in personal, followed by “previous trading” (38.2%), “by phone” (14.8%). Similar proportion was seen in all three study districts and among CFUG members. While in case of the retailer the proportion of “by phone” increased to 75 percent and followed by “In Personal” (18.8%).

The statistical analysis of Pearson chi-square test shows that there was significant association among the respondent of Banke, Salyan and Dolpa, significant association between CFUG member and retailers and significant association between female and male because the P=.006, .000 and .000 respectively

which are less than .05 significant level. Traditional practices of contacting the buyers or sellers were found very common among the usufructs of study districts also. Majority reported that they contacted the buyers or sellers through in personal and previous trading.

Source of price information of NTFPs used in last time: Table-3 illustrates source used by respondents to get the price of the NTFPs at last time when they trade NTFPs. Of the total respondents it was found that 54.4% of the respondents got price of NTFPs from friends followed by “in personal” (45.4%), “CFUG” (33%) “from traders” (19.4%) “by phone” (16.0%) and small percent of the respondents said other sources like Radio, NGO staff, Newspaper/ Magazine, TV, Government office and Posters/Brochures/Factsheets/Internet/website.

When analyzing the data on the basis of the district, in Banke, majority 70.1 percent of the respondents were found to used CFUG to get the price of the NTFPs followed “friends” (46.9%), “in personal” (22.0%). Where in case of Salyan 62.6% of the respondents said they get the price information from “friends” followed by “in personal” (60.0%), “from traders” (30.7%), “by phone” (19.6%). Likewise in Dolpa 56.3% of the respondents got information in personal and 43.8% of the respondents were found to have used “from traders”. Similarly in case of the retailer 87.7% of the respondents reported to used “in personal” to get the price information of the NTFPs in last time.

Table-2: Way to connect with Producer/seller/buyers.

Way		District			Total	Type of respondent		Total	Gender		Total
		Banke	Salyan	Dolpa		CFUG Member	Retailer		Female	Male	
By phone	N	33	31	5	69	57	12	69	13	56	69
	%	18.3%	11.5%	31.3%	14.8%	12.7%	75.0%	14.8%	7.9%	18.6%	14.8%
Previous trading	N	54	120	4	178	177	1	178	56	122	178
	%	30.0%	44.4%	25.0%	38.2%	39.3%	6.3%	38.2%	33.9%	40.5%	38.2%
In personal	N	93	119	7	219	216	3	219	96	123	219
	%	51.7%	44.1%	43.8%	47.0%	48.0%	18.8%	47.0%	58.2%	40.9%	47.0%
Total	N	180	270	16	466	450	16	466	165	301	466
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Pearson Chi-Square		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
		14.466 _a	4	.006		47.784 ^a	2	.000	16.295 _a	2	.000

Table-3: Source of price information of NTFPs used in last time.

Source of price information	Total		District						Type of respondent				Gender			
	N	%	Banke		Salyan		Dolpa		CFUG Member		Retailer		Female		Male	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Friends	252	54.4	83	46.9	169	62.6	0	0	246	55.0	6	37.5	87	53.0	165	55.2
In personal	210	45.4	39	22.0	162	60.0	9	56.3	196	43.8	14	87.5	54	32.9	156	52.2
Community Forest Users Group	153	33.0	124	70.1	29	10.7	0	0	152	34.0	1	6.3	64	39.0	89	29.8
From traders	90	19.4			83	30.7	7	43.8	83	18.6	7	43.8	33	20.1	57	19.1
By phone	76	16.4	23	13.0	53	19.6	0	0	66	14.8	10	62.5	16	9.8	60	20.1
From local traders	13	2.8			13	4.8	0	0	13	2.9			3	1.8	10	3.3
Radio	11	2.4	10	5.6	1	.4	0	0	9	2.0	2	12.5	6	3.7	5	1.7
NGO staff	10	2.2	8	4.5	2	.7	0	0	10	2.2			3	1.8	7	2.3
Newspapers/ magazines	7	1.5	3	1.7	4	1.5	0	0	5	1.1	2	12.5	0	0	7	2.3
TV	2	.4	1	.6	1	.4	0	0	2	.4			1	.6	1	.3
Government office	2	.4			2	.7	0	0	1	.2	1	6.3	1	.6	1	.3
Posters/Brochures/ Factsheets/Internet / website	2	.4	0	0	2	.7	0	0	2	.4	0	0	1	.6	1	.3

Still majority of respondents were using the informal source of information to collect the knowledge of price of non-timber forest products. This is the common nature of Nepalese society that first of all, everyone use to ask to their friends or neighbor about their problem or concern to get the information then only takes the decision. This cultural practice had influenced the usufructs also. As a reason, they shared that there was no option than the in personal contact to know the price information of non-timber forest product. Because of the lack of infrastructure development in rural society, there is no easy access on district forest office or Jadibuti Association of Nepal or other NTFPs related office. In the case of Dolpa, they have to walk minimum 1 hour to 5 hours to reach in such offices so they tried to use the easy process either asking from phone call or in personal contact. It indicates the need of permanent functional institution of MPIS in rural community also which can provide the reliable market price information in daily basis as the need and inquiry of usufructs.

Money spend to get price information of NTFPs in last time: From the discussion with the respondents, it was shared that there was very difficult to get the information of non-timber forest products. Majority of usufructs were living in the remote

rural areas whereas the government and non-government offices are located in the district headquarter. So, most of the rural usufructs said that even they had no knowledge where is NTFPs related offices in districts. They had no access on such offices and since long time selling NTFPs to local venders in negotiated price. The data presented in Table-4 shows the cost incurred to get the price information. Highest majority of the respondents reported that this question was not relevant for them. While in case of the retailer out of the 15 retailers 7 retailers said it cost NRs. 301-500 to get that price information.

It is interesting finding of this study that 94% usufructs said that they did not spend the money to get the information of price and market information of NTFP. The researcher became interested to know the reason. The usufructs said that they were selling their products to local venders; basically middlemen who visits to usufructs to purchase the NTFPs. It very clearly indicated the lack of knowledge among the usufructs about the market and its real price. So there is need to sensitize the usufructs about the importance of market price information system and need to empower then on it. The increased access on market price information system can significantly contribute on their income and can be motivated to safe the forest and forest products.

Table-4: Money spends to get price information of NTFPs in last time.

	Total		District						Type of respondent				Gender			
			Banke		Salyan		Dolpa		CFUG Member		Retailer		Female		Male	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 100	12	2.6	8	4.4	2	.7	2	12.5	450	100.0	16	100.0	165	100.0	301	100.0
100-300	11	2.4	2	1.1	9	3.3			10	2.2	2	12.5	3	1.8	9	3.0
301-500	2	.4			1	.4	1	6.3	4	.9	7	43.8	1	.6	10	3.3
More than 500	3	.6	1	.6	2	.7					2	12.5	1	.6	1	.3
Not relevant for me	438	94.0	169	93.9	256	94.8	13	81.3	3	.7			1	.6	2	.7
Total	466	100.0	180	100.0	270	100.0	16	100.0	433	96.2	5	31.3	159	96.4	279	92.7

Place to get the price information about NTFPs most often:

Table-5 illustrate the most frequent source that is used to get the price information of the NTFPs and reason for using those source. Out of the respondents 65.7% reported that they used friends/seller as a source to get the price information of the NTFPs followed by CFUGs (23.6%), hording board (7.7%). In case of Banke 55.6% of the respondents used CFUGs as a source to get the price information of the NTFPs where 36.7% of respondents used friends/seller as a source. While in Salyan district, 83% of the respondents used friends/seller as a source to get the price information to get the price information. Similarly in Dolpa all the respondents use friends/seller as source. 100% of the retailer respondents reported the only source of information to get the price information of NTFPs is friends/seller.

When asked the reason to use those source for getting price information, 62.4% of the respondents said they used those particular source regularly before followed by “easy access” (21.5%) and “do not have other sources”(16.5%). The proportion was found universal in Banke and Salyan but in case of Dolpa 56.3% of the respondents have no other source of information followed by used that source regularly before.

It is the nature of human being that they always used to contact the same person and sources who is more trustworthy and reliable. From the analysis of data, it was found that majority (65.7%) reported that they frequently visited friends or seller directly to know the price and market of non-timber forest products because they felt more reliable in their information. It is sand to know that usufructs had no believe on the hoarding board or notice board of price and market of NTFPs because of the irregularity in revision and updating the information in notice board which is the challenge of concerned authority also. Nepal government and non-government organization should be more responsible to convince the usufructs about their MPIS.

Total annual income from NTFPs:

From the series of discussion with usufructs, it was reported that they had no easy access on the formal channel of MPIS so they were mostly selling NTFPs on the basis of given information of friends and local venders. From the observation and discussion, usufructs were sharing their grievances of not getting the real price of their goods. So, the study had asked the respondent about their annual income from NTFP. The data presented in the Table-6 shows that mean income of Banke was 23553.89, Salyan was 21512.22 and Dolpa was 54937.50. In total mean income of NTFP were 23448.50. The level of income shows that annual income of Dolpa was better than the income of Banke and Salyan. If we rank the district on the basis of their income then Dolpa come first position, Banke comes in second position and Salyan comes in third position.

Dolpa was earning better income from NTFPs than other districts because they collect the high value products such as Yarsagumba. The contribution of forest and forest product is more significant to improve the economic and social status of community people. During the time of face to face discussion, 45 years Mr. Gurung of Dolpa said that his main source of income was agriculture, livestock and forest products. Since last 10 years, he was actively involved in the forest users group and collecting and selling the NTFPs.

He was earning good amount from the NTFPs and was able to manage the cost of education of his three children. Similar, story was shared by Mr. Shah of Banke district who was doing the business of NTFPs. His main source of income was NTFPs business.

He said that he had purchased the house in Nepalgunj and able to manage all the daily cost of house from the income of NTFPs business. So it can be said that NTFP is the reliable source of income to manage the livelihood of people.

Table-5: Place to get the price information about NTFPs most often.

		District			Total	Type of respondent		Total	Gender		Total
		Banke	Salyan	Dolpa		CFUG Member	Retailer		Female	Male	
CFUGs	N	100	10	0	110	110	0	110	42	68	110
	%	55.6%	3.7%	0.0%	23.6%	24.4%	0.0%	23.6%	25.5%	22.6%	23.6%
Hording board	N	3	33	0	36	36	0	36	11	25	36
	%	1.7%	12.2%	0.0%	7.7%	8.0%	0.0%	7.7%	6.7%	8.3%	7.7%
Newspapers/ magazines	N	1	3	0	4	4	0	4	2	2	4
	%	.6%	1.1%	0.0%	.9%	.9%	0.0%	.9%	1.2%	.7%	.9%
Friends/ seller	N	66	224	16	306	290	16	306	105	201	306
	%	36.7%	83.0%	100.0%	65.7%	64.4%	100.0%	65.7%	63.6%	66.8%	65.7%
From the president of CFUG	N	10	0	0	10	10	0	10	5	5	10
	%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	2.2%	0.0%	2.1%	3.0%	1.7%	2.1%
Total	N	180	270	16	466	450	16	466	165	301	466
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table-6: Total annual income from NTFPs.

Descriptive								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Banke	180	23553.89	51439.188	3834.051	15988.14	31119.64	4000	500000
Salyan	270	21512.22	22672.925	1379.830	18795.58	24228.86	2500	200000
Dolpa	16	54937.50	15450.863	3862.716	46704.32	63170.68	35000	90000
Total	466	23448.50	36877.446	1708.315	20091.52	26805.47	2500	500000

Various previous literatures have shown the role of NTFPs in alleviating poverty, especially for those people who are more dependent on the forest and forest product. A study of India has also shown the importance of NTFP which has provided the subsistence and cash income to millions of tribal and forest dwellers. NTFP is used as a major source of fuel, fodder, food, medicines, construction materials, and livelihoods. Study done in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Bihar showed that more than 80% forest dwellers were depending fully on forest resources basically NTFP. Similarly, 17% landless people were depending on daily wage labour, who

worked for the collection of NTFPs and 39% were engaged in NTFP collection as a subsidiary occupation¹³. The collection, storing and selling of NTFPs is a source of cash income, because of the growing commercial importance of forest products. The average household income earned by the sale of NTFPs varies from State to State, region to region and from one area to another because its quantity, quality, market price information system and access of market¹⁴. A study found that in tribal areas of Orissa more than 60% households depend on forests for between 15% and 50% of their incomes every year¹⁵. Average annual income of per household was Rs. 9000 earned

from various NTFPs in the Sathy Forest Range of Western Tamil Nadu¹⁶. In comparison of income of Tamil Nadu India, the income of per household of Dolpa, Salyan and Banke was found better because they were earning annually NPR. 23448.50 in an average.

Conclusion

The study did series of discussion with the usufructs to know the practice of market price information of non-timber forest products and found that still price was being decided from the negotiation process of sellers and buyers. The formal channels of market price information system was reported not so effective to ensure the reliability of information published in website or displayed in notice board. So, it is the challenge of concerned organization of NTFPs also to play the effective role to ensure the reliability of MPIS and need to be easy access on it. Majority reported that they tried to find out the appropriate buyers or sellers through individual contact. Almost 100% respondents suggested to update the information time to time and should give the real information as in market. The role of middlemen is found dominant to determine the price of NTFPs. Though, the usufructs were satisfied from the income of NTFPs but there is high chance to increase the income by establishing the effective market price information system of NTFPs. The informal process of price determination should be strongly discouraged and need to study on the role of MPIS to increase the income of usufruct and sustainable management of non-timber forest products.

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