
**A SURVEY OF THE MARKET AVAILABILITY AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR NON-WOOD
FOREST PRODUCTS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
MEDICINAL PLANTS AND CANE**

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Forests provide numerous benefits other than timber and fuelwood and these are called non-wood forest products. They play a vital role especially in the rural economy and provide benefits of considerable importance at the national level. Despite an escalating demand, these non wood forest products do not enter markets directly due to the absence of proper marketing channels. This discourage primary collectors, do not warrant for sustainable collection of the produce in the wild and the possible planting of the resources.

This study was conducted to assess the current market situation for non-wood forest products with special reference to medicinal plants and cane with a view to make recommendations for the improvement of the marketing situation in this regard.

Data were collected from plant collectors, small scale regional buyers and wholesale dealers by way of questionnaires and interviews. To collect information on medicinal plants 4 areas where medicinal plants are very much abundant were selected, viz. Ritigala (Anuradhapura District), Rajawakaa (Ratnapura District), Kanneliya (Galle District) and Bibile (Moneragala District). With regard to Cane, the most abundant areas; Manampitiya (Polonnaruwa District) and Baduraliya (Kalutara District) were selected. Further, data were also collected from wholesale dealers of medicinal plants at Gabo's Lane and ayurvedic product manufacturers. With regard to cane, product manufacturers at Radawadunna were interviewed. Secondary data were collected from institutions.

The results revealed that both medicinal plants and cane are being collected in a unsustainable manner. As the existing marketing situation is disorganised, the middle man is benefited most while the collectors do not reap much benefit for their labour. Majority of the crude medicinal plant materials are still imported while there is very low value addition to the material that is exported. Most of the raw cane too is imported. The cane available in the country do not fetch a good demand as it is considered as low quality. Most of the people engaged in these businesses do not use the facilities offered by the banks very much possibly through unawareness.

The following recommendations emanated from the study to improve the marketing situation with regard to the above industries in the country; introduction of sustainable methods of collection, planting of the produce in country as large medium scale plantations, improving the quality of products and value addition and making the people more aware for the facilities provided by financial organizations to improve the industries.