CHAPTER – XI
DISCUSSION

The main focus of the study as stated earlier was to understanding the production/collection/extraction and marketing practices of NTFPs and its impact on the income and quality of life of people engaged in this occupation with special reference to the tribals of Kollegal taluk. The results presented in the previous chapters on various aspects of NTFPs economy are discussed in this chapter under the following headings:

1. Socio-economic background of the tribals.
2. Identification of the important NTFPs and its collection and temporal pattern of supply.
3. Employment, income and food consumption pattern of respondents.
4. Production/collection and extraction of NTFPs.
5. System of marketing of NTFPs – organized and unorganized marketing channels and associated prices.
6. Factors influencing the collection of NTFPs.
7. The NTFPs linkages of LAMP Sectors with private trade sectors.

11.1 Socio-Economic Background of the Tribals

As the focus of the study was on NTFPs and its dependence by tribals, the respondents in Kollegal taluk were tribals
belonging to the Soliga community. The households consisted of moderate family size with very little are exposure to education.

A characteristic feature among the tribals was the virtual absence of any permanent asset and total dependence on the forests for their livelihood. The general economic condition of the tribals is far from satisfactory. Except those tribals who are engaged by the forest department as regular employees and paid regular salaries, the others as a rule live below the poverty line. There are no industries in the study area and by agriculture cultivation was not enough income for their livelihood. Other agriculture labour is insufficient in its availability and un-remunerative in consideration. The average land holding is about 1.40 acres which is all dry and of poor quality. Supplementary occupations like livestock requiring is also at low level.

The housing provided to the tribals is not adequate. Majority of them live in huts, which are too tiny and poorly, built. The personal belongings or savings are absolutely non-existent. Two to three set of cloth, a few earthen pots, a couple of aluminum plates and tumblers and one or two brass labels is all that they own. They have either knowledge of banking and nor on saving. What little they can earn is mostly spent on food and drinks.

The standard of literacy is very low and surprisingly, there was a very few educated adult member among the sample households.
nor any adult educational facilities available in the area. The language spoken by these tribals is similar to Kannada with varying intonation akin to Tamil and Malayalam.

11.2 Identification of the Important NTFPs and its Collection and Temporal Pattern of Supply

Even though it is reported that there are more than 3000 plant species of economic importance yielding products that provide food, fodder, clothing, shelter, medicines and others including income for the well-being of the communities living in and around the forests and beyond, all species are not available in a particular locality nor commercially exploited in a single locality. The availability and relative importance of these products varies from region to region. It can be observed from the results that there is 29 items of NTFPs having different usages are being commercially exploited in Kollegal region. This is in addition to the numerous other items such as mushrooms, bamboo sprout, roots, tubers leaves; flowers, fruits, seeds and medicinal plants are herbs collected for daily consumption.

It is also evident from the results that one or the other product is available for exploitation and the tribals could be engaged in forest based activities for much of the year. There are, however, a number of peak periods when forests are intensively used for specific products collection. The NTFPs collection activities are negligible during the kharif season during which the tribals engage themselves in agricultural activities. Agricultural activities begin in June-July
with the onset of south west monsoon during which they sow ragi, jowar, avare, horsegram and later harvest in November - December. An observation was also made that forest product collection activities fill in the gap when there is little agricultural work available. Fortunately the NTFPs regenerate during monsoon months and the flowering fruiting and seeding patterns of many important forest species occur during winter and dry season following crop harvest and preceding monsoon. However, certain activities such as fuel wood head loading and collection of korai grass, dry and dead bamboos. Prevail during the entire year depending upon the usage and market opportunities.

11.3 Employment, Income and Food Consumption Pattern of Respondents

The tribals, in general, have meager resources in terms of land and livestock and majority of them depend upon the forest products for their livelihood. The employment opportunities in agriculture are low in view of their forest habitat and subsistence living. As they have limited for employment, they continue to depend on NTFPs for major part of the employment and income. It was observed that the overall employment level per household was to the extent of 264.50 man days per annum. Among the different employment opportunities available, the collection of NTFPs provided the maximum employment to the extent of 101.76 man days.
There was not much difference in the pattern of employment in the different ranges and all the ranges NTFPs provided more opportunities for employment. The general economic condition of the tribals is far from satisfactory and they live below the poverty line. The income received by the tribal households from different activities are presented in results. It can be observed that on an average, the total household income was Rs.12,544.49. As regards to the sources of income, NTFPs contributed the maximum of Rs.6002.24 to the total income followed by farm activities Rs.3338.65.

The food consumption pattern of the major food items by the tribal households depicts the average total expenditure on food varied from a minimum of Rs.11347.65 per household in respect of Ramapuram range to a maximum of Rs.12553.05 with respect to Kollegal range. In all the selected ranges more than 50 per cent of the food budget was spent on ragi, rice, jowar and alcohol and meat. The other items included in the food basket were pulses like cowpea, avare, horsegram, beverages, fruits, vegetables, milk, jaggary and sugar, etc.

The tribals are lack of balanced nutrition diet because they have poor purchasing power to buy a food item. It can be seen those in terms of calorie intake, on an average only 1324.68 kilo calorie per capita per day available for consumption.
11.4 Production and Extraction of NTFPs

The extraction pattern of major forest products, the relative importance and availability also varied in each range the members traveled. In MM Hills on an average, the tribals have spent 8 to 10 hrs per day in the process of location and extraction of the NTFPs depending upon the nature of the product, the distance traveled per day range between a minimum of 15 kms and a maximum of 21 kms. The value of the NTFPs collected in a day varied depending on the value of the collection and prices realized. In terms of value, honey earned the maximum revenue to the extent of Rs.937.50 per household per day and the lowest revenue realized was from broomstick grass Rs.31.73 per household per day.

The composition of the major NTFPs exploited in Hanur range reveals that the households engaged maximum number of days (46.12 and 41.28 days in collection and head loading of broomsticks and date leaves and korai grass. On an average, the number spent about 8-10 hrs per day and traveled a maximum to and fro distance of 18.21 km in collection of date leaves and korai grass.

The value of the NTFPs collected honey earned the maximum revenue to the extent of Rs.981.75 per household per day and the lowest revenue realized was from tarakai Rs.28.13 per household per day.
In Ramapuram range collection of firewood provided the maximum household employment (40.00) man days. The minimum days spent was on tarekai, which was 18.01 days. In terms of revenue, it was observed that the tribal household on an average, realized a maximum of rupees 944.25 in case of honey per collection. The per day revenue was lowest in case of tarekai which provides a meager revenue of rs.25.00 in a days collection.

The extraction pattern of NTFPs with respect to MM Hills range, dead and dry bamboo provided the maximum (47.00 days) household employment. The minimum days spent on stone and tree mass (16.18 days). But in terms of revenue realization, the per day value realization was lowest in case of bela Rs.39.24 on the other hand honey earned the maximum revenue to the extent of Rs.790.05 per household per day.

Thus the above information indicate that the tribals are in access to one or the other NTFPs throughout the year. But their intensity of exploitation and economic significance varied from place to place and region to region. However, the number of hours spent per day and the distance traveled for collection of NTFPs remained the same in all the cases without much variation from one location to another location.
11.5 Marketing System for NTFPs

NTFPs in general, command a premium value for their novelty intrinsic properties and their limited supply in the final market. But what the tribal receive at the first point of sale is a pittance in view of the unorganized system of marketing prevailing for majority of the products. The lack of information among the collectors about the true worth of the product and their poor economic status prevents them from realizing a fair return for their efforts and they are usually satisfied with whatever they receive. They are unable to organize their efforts and bargain for a better price as they are in dire need for whatever cash income they can receive. There are three marketing channels prevailing, which include, subsistence use for self consumption, sale to private traders/middlemen and organized marketing channels – sales through cooperatives.

The first channel is usually for food items necessary for domestic consumption and local sale either on cash or barter basis. This includes tubers, roots, fruits, mushrooms, bamboo sprouts, medicinal plants, firewood, fodder, and construction material. Et.

The second channel which is most dominated by the private traders who either operates directly or through local collection agents and then sells it to retailer after processing. The method of sale is not competitive as there are not established assembling markets for NTFPs in this region. The prices are negotiated looking at
the condition of the seller and his need for cash. Often the collectors care indebted to the trader, who therefore, compelled to sell their produce at whatever price that is offered and part of the payment is adjusted against the borrowings. This channel is popular because the trader constitutes the only source of finance to the tribals who otherwise possess very low level of credit worthiness and institutional source of credit is inaccessible. The other channel is cooperative where the government exercises some control on the prices paid to the NTFPs collectors.

The third channel is organized marketing channel sales through cooperatives. Marketing is a major problem faced by the tribals since organized markets for pooling, processing and marketing NTFPs are ascent. This makes them highly vulnerable for exploitation by the middleman. Large sized Adivasi multipurpose cooperative societies (LAMPS) has been established with the objective of marketing the NTFPs collected by the tribals, so as to enable to realize a fair share of the consumers price. In the study area LAMPS operated in one of the four ranges, namely Hanur range. This suggests that the coverage of LAMPS was not adequate.

11.6 Factors Influencing the Collection of NTFPs

To gauge the importance of NTFPs collection as an economic activity among the tribals, a multiple linear regression with income from NTFPs as a dependent variable and size of households, land holding, education, employment, agriculture income, wages,
allied income, cash expenses and others as independent variables. The multilinear regression analysis establishes the contribution of selected variable in collection of NTFPs. Six variables out of nine variables showed positive impact on the dependent variable and also reveal the agricultural income, wages and allied income were statistical significant contributing factors. However, it can be conducted that agricultural income and wages play a major and significant role in the enhancement of the dependent variable i.e., NTFPs.

The factor analysis was employed to identify the factors influencing the collection of NTFPs by sample households. Higher the factor loading of a variable on a particular dimension, higher will be its association with that dimensions than its association with other dimensions. The highest factor leading in dimension 1 is land holding (-0.152) and education (-0.068) with negative relationship. However, other variables loading with positive relationships emphasizing the main factor as NTFPs income (0.7162) in dimension-1, and dimension-2 (0.5424), dimension-3 (0.4785) and dimension-4 (0.4369). The variance contribution explained by factor 1 found to be highest (63.85%) followed by second factor (47.50%), third factor (35.39%) and fourth factor (22.59%).
11.7 The NTFPs Linkages of LAMP Sectors with Private Trade Sectors

a) The Linkages of NTFPs Sectors with Other Sectors: The production resources available with tribals did not permit them to undertake any production activity and hence their dependence on NTFPs was widespread to derive their livelihood. The collection of NTFPs provided the maximum employment to the extent of 101.76 man days per year besides they derived employment from farming activities, wages employment and other activities.

The income derived from NTFPs was the single largest source, NTFPs contributed the maximum of Rs.6002.24 to the total income, and it was not sufficient to meet even their subsistence requirement of food. Hence they were forced to supplement it through labour sale, allied activities and even through subsistence farming. Their level of income, on an average, was below the poverty line of Rs.26,000 per family per annum.

b) The NTFPs Linkage of LAMPS with Private Trade Sectors: The LAMPS established with the objective marketing the NTFPs collected by the tribals. The comparison of prices received by the collector of NTFPs through both private and cooperative channels show that the procurement/purchase prices for different NTFPs are almost different in both the channels. Perhaps LAMPS could establish the price, which the traders followed. However, the sale price realized by private trader was far higher than what was realized by LAMPS. The higher
price realization of the private traders was due to the sale of value added products accomplished through processing and grading. The LAMP Society do not undertake processing and grading activity, but they sell it in bulk to the same traders locally thus realizing a lower return.

The performance of LAMP Society over the years was not encouraging as there was a steady decline in the procurement in terms of value. Despite this is the society has been earning high grass margin of around 44 per cent from the sale of NTFPs in which there is scope for rationalization and passing on part of the benefit to the collectors. There is an urgent need for creation of marketing infrastructure for processing, storage, grading and other value addition activities in order to reap the full benefits of the collection effort. Markets in tribal areas need to be networked to bigger markets to promote subsidiary activities such as bee keeping, dairying, piggery, poultry and other similar activities.

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that the marketing of the NTFPs leaves much to be desired and there is ample scope for improvement. Marketing credit organized through LAMP Society can improve the earning of the collectors. Hitherto, LAMPS, as an alternative channel of marketing has played minor role limiting its activities to act as an agent for obtaining lease of forest areas from the forest department for the collection of NTFPs on behalf of tribals.
The knowledge of tribals regarding scientific method of exploiting NTFPs is inadequate, hence the LAMPS should impart training on scientific method of collection and focus its efforts on value addition activities such as processing, storage, grading, etc., to realize higher benefits to the collectors.