

Gathering Non-timber forest products in Market Economy: A case study of Sahakone Dan Xang Fresh Food Market in Xaithany District, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR¹⁹⁾

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ABSTRACT

The research found that all of villager gathered NTFPs. They use simple tools for collecting NTFPs. There are 27 species of wild vegetables, 23 species of insects, and 10 species of wildlife villager is reported to collect. Species of wildlife is rapidly changing while the type of wild vegetables and insects are mostly still the same. However, the abundance has changed dramatically, particularly of a wild vegetable Phak Van.

Many species of NTFPs from many places are found in the market, some coming from other districts. There are 32 species of wild vegetables coming from 17 places, 21 species of insects from 23 places, and 4 wildlife species from 10 places. The majority of NTFPs delivered to Sahakone Dan Xang market is Xaithany district particularly Dong Makkhai which supplies several kinds of NTFPs to the Sahakone Dan Xang market. The best selling in the market are ant egg, grasshopper, cricket, honeycomb among others. NTFPs market demand for wildlife is most times larger than other supply.

Local people they have a keen interest in sustaining sources of NTFPs. They have an idea to practice conservation through forest conservation, with holding NTFPs in the *full moon and moonless days*, tree planting, avoiding trade of rare species, stop poaching, reduced NTFPs gathering. However, in present days local people expand and intensify their NTFPs gathering to meet the market demand growing.

1. Background

Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is a country rich in natural resources, especially within the forests that cover about 47% of the country (Sisouphanthong, B. and Taillard, C., 2000). The forest is important for both the national economy and the livelihood of rural people (Bouapao. L., 2005), which provides many kinds of food, herbs, energy (fire wood), and socio-economic well-being of local people's livelihood (Smith R.D and Maltby E., 2003).

However, socio-economic development and natural resources are necessary to balance to maintain sustainability, strategic interventions which should result in positive outcomes for the Lao PDR's environment (Australia- Lao PDR, 1999). This is a hot issue that our global ecological economy is faced with particularly in the least developed countries including Lao PDR, in where local people still gather NTFPs to support their livelihood (Bouapao. L., 2005).

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2. Objectives

- To understand the knowledge system for non-timber forest products gathered in the current period and ten year back in the past.
- To identify the main species of non-timber forest collected and traded, and market demands
- To exam there is any change in the abundance of NTFPs

3. Research Methodologies

Two survey were conducted one in Dong Makkhai village and the other in the local market Sahaknoe Dan Xang by interview and observation. Using of summarizing variable and descriptive statistic. To measure the household income from NTFPs among poor and non poor groups; Data analysis also will classify household economy of Dong Makkhai village to two groups by criteria household income per capita. To consider the poor people get income < \$ 1/capita/day, and non poor people get income >\$1/capita/day. To analysis the trend of market demands by seller experience of customer demand consumption.

4. Results and Discussion

According to interview of 176 households or 55.69% of total household in Dong Makkhai village and 34 people or 91.89% of total sellers in Sahakone Dan Xang market. The study found that the main jobs of interviewees are farmers, particularly Dong Makkhai villager. They are *Lao Lum* tribe; a largely Buddhist community. The number of population in Dong Makkhai village has increase rapidly, from 2005–2007. Most have had experiences gathering NTFPs for a long time, an average experience is 21 years, maximum is 62 years and minimum is 1 year. They go to gather NTFPs on average 5 times/household/week. All household members have a role in gathering NTFPs, although female harvesters represent a higher number than males.

The places that they have been using to collect NTFPs are around the village. The distance average to collect NTFPs from the village is 3 km, while the nearest is 0.5 km and the farthest is 7 km. There are 27 species of wild vegetables, 21 species of insects, and 10 species of wildlife that were gathered in study site. The most abundant NTFPs in Dong Makkhai village is *dokkachea*, grasshopper, cicada, mushroom, rat, *meangkeang*, *phakkadon*. However, to compare the situation of NTFPs in last ten years is different particularly due to the population increase, market demands. So there is a high competition for gathering NTFPs leading to ecological change, particularly declining many kinds of wildlife, and some species of wild vegetable, especially Phak van. This issue is challenge f or forestry management, and biodiversity conservation in the future.

NTFPs are very important for household food consumption. However, NTFPs also have an important role for the household economy by providing income; which provides 23% of the total income on average. 15% of the interviewees do not get cash income from the NTFPs, but use for food consumption only, while 49% of the interviewees get cash income from NTFPs > 50% of total household cash income. Moreover some households get 100% of their income from NTFPs, showing how much they rely on NTFPs. Poor people who get income <\$1/capita/day

85% of total interviewees rely on NTFPs 59% of their total household cash income. In addition NTFPs also has importance role to provide goods to the market.

According to the observation in dry season of Sahakone Dan Xang market has 32 species of wild vegetable coming from 17 places. There are 21 species of insects from 23 places, and 4 species of wildlife from 10 places. Dong Makkhai village is a big source to provide of wild vegetables, insects, and wildlife to the Sahakone Dan Xang market. The best selling in Sahakone Dan Xang market is insects such as ant egg, grasshopper, cricket, honeycomb, lizards, wasp, cicada, and honey bee. The market demand for wildlife is higher than other type, but not significant, because small number of wildlife trade in the market to compare with wild vegetable and insects, and the Lao government does not allow trade the rare wildlife species. According to seller's experience the customers who prefer shopping in this market has also increased.

According to Dong Makkhai villagers experience gathering NTFPs, mostly they use traditional tools and very simple methods to collect NTFPs so that plants they get from treetop are able to sprout in the next season. For the animal harvesting, they also get directly by hand such as grasshopper, dung beetle, *meangkeang*, and most of them use simple method and tool to collect such as shaking the tree, use net, tree's glue, hoe etc. For the wildlife mostly they use trap. However, the species of NTFPs particularly wildlife is rapidly changed, for the wild vegetable and insects are mostly still the same, but the abundance is changed, particularly amount of Phak Van be come a problem in Dong Makkai village in present day, because local people follow with the market demands. The local people have some ideas for sustaining NTFPs such as forest conservation is 74%, do not gather NTFPs in full moon and moonless days 8%, tree planting 7%, avoiding trade rare species 5%, stop hunting 2%, reduced gathering 1%, and have no idea is 3%. However, some of them in real practices are still following the market demand, and careless about forest conservation, e.g selling Phak van's tree, it might cause to limited of Phak van in Dong Makkhai village presently.

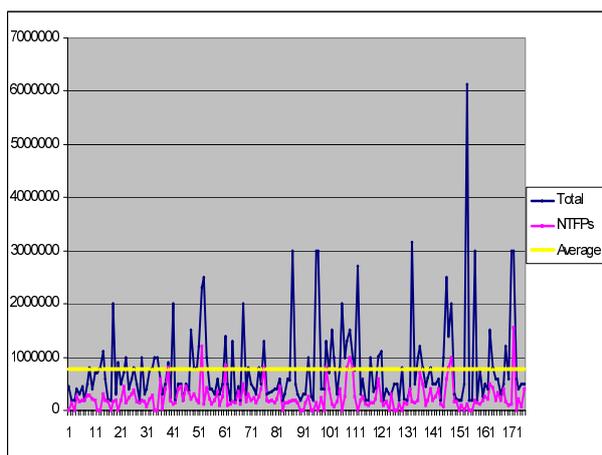


Fig.1 Household cash income from non-timber forest products

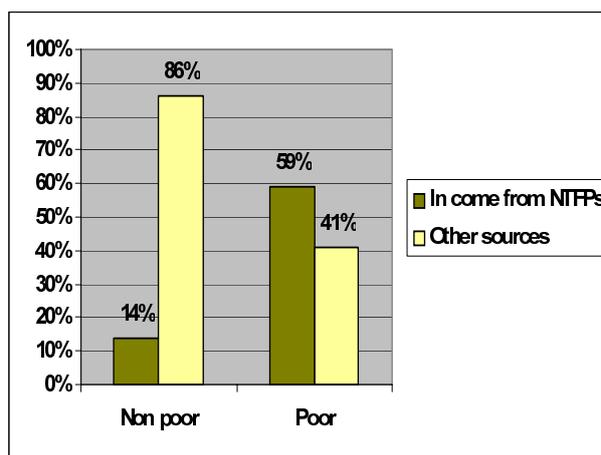


Fig.2 Comparison poor and non poor people group get cash income from non-timber forest products

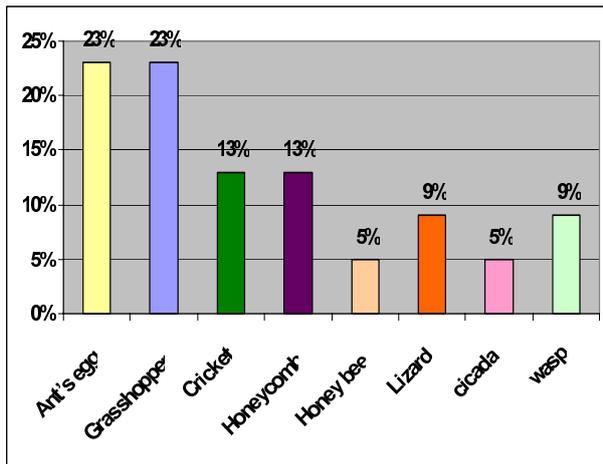


Fig.3 The best selling of insects in Sahakone Dan Xang market

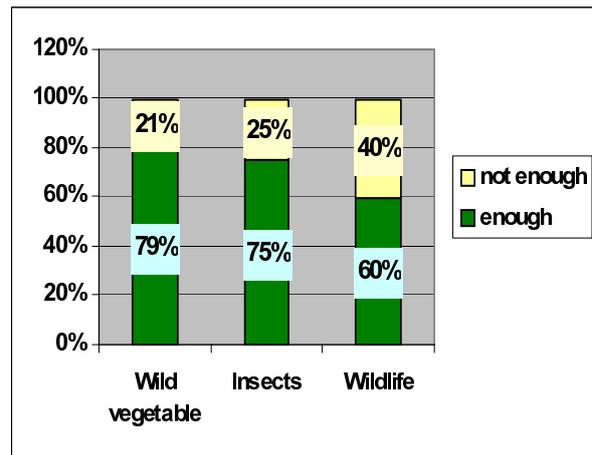


Fig.4 The trend of market demands of NTFPs in Sahakone Dan Xang market

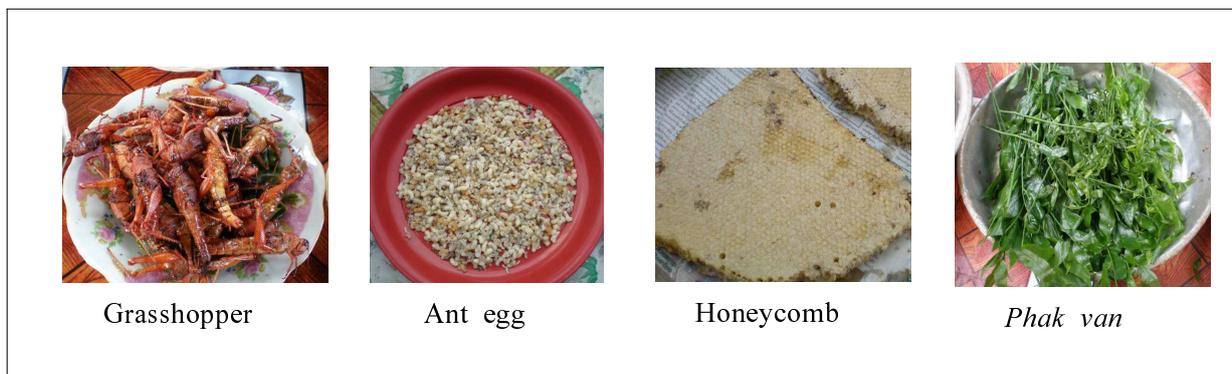


Fig.5 Examples of NTFPs in Sahakone Dan Xang market