

**A policy brief on  
Convergence of CFRR with NTFP-based livelihoods**

Submitted to  
**Bastar Administration**

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Training, Capacity Building and Support for Decision-Making for  
CFRR Recognition & Management in Bastar District

by

**ATREE**



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## CFRR और लघु वनोपज-आधारित आजीविकाओं में कन्वरजेन्स



### पृष्ठभूमि:

छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य ने वन-आश्रित आजीविकाओं को लेकर विशेष कदम उठाए हैं। 2019 में तेंदू पत्ते के संग्रहण दर को 60% बढ़ाया गया और उसी वर्ष से न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य पर बड़ी मात्रा में अन्य लघु वनोपज (NTFP) की खरीदी की जा रही है। साथ-साथ सामुदायिक वन संसाधन अधिकार (CFRR) को मान्यता देने की प्रक्रिया भी तेज़ी से आगे बढ़ चुकी है। लेकिन सामुदायिक अधिकार और अब तक की लघु वनोपज संग्रहण और बिक्री की सहकारी संघ व्यवस्था में द्वंद्व की संभावना भी है। इस सवाल पर समझ बनाने के लिए बस्तर जिले में लघु वनोपज संग्रहण एवं विपणन का अध्ययन किया गया।

### अध्ययन के उद्देश्य:

1. बस्तर जिले में आजीविका के नज़रिए से लघु वनोपज पर निर्भरता की क्या स्थिति है?
2. लघु वनोपज सम्बंधित सरकारी योजनाओं एवं प्रणाली का क्या प्रभाव पड़ा है?
3. CFRR मान्य होने पर किस तरह लघु वनोपज संग्रहण के माध्यम से (वन संरक्षण को बरकरार रखते हुए) आजीविका संवर्धन हो सकता है?



### शोध पद्धति:

- तीन गाँवों का गहरा अध्ययन (नेतानार, संधकरमरी, कुरंदी)
- साक्षात्कार – ग्रामवासी, महिला समूह, बड़े और छोटे व्यापारी, प्राथमिक समिति प्रबंधक
- फील्ड विजिट
- तेंदू पत्ता और MSP योजना का अधिकृत डाटा



(बाएँ) जंगल में कांदा खोद निकालते हुए; (दाएँ) ग्राम कुरंदी के औषधि प्रसंस्करण केंद्र में माँ दंतेश्वरी ज्योति महिला समूह के सदस्य

## मुख्य परिणाम:

### बस्तर जिले में लघु वनोपज की उपलब्धता की स्थिति

- जंगल घट रहा है और लगभग सभी लघु वनोपज की उपलब्धता भी घट रही है। तीन प्रमुख कारण: खेती के लिए पेड़ों की सफाई, कूप-कटाई, विस्तारित रोड नेटवर्क से वनोपज का अत्यधिक दोहन
- कम होनेवाले वनोपज (संक्षिप्त सूची): कोसा, धूप, साल बीज, हर्रा, बहेड़ा, आँवला, चार, कालमेघ, गिलोय, बाँस/बास्ता, कई प्रकार के फल, कांदा, भाजी, छाती और बोडा

### सरकारी प्रणाली का प्रभाव:

- MSP योजना से कुछ हद तक आमदनी में वृद्धि हुई है, लेकिन अधिकांश लघु वनोपज व्यापार प्राइवेट हाथों में ही है।
- तेंदू पत्ता: जिले के 15 में से 9 प्राथमिक समितियों के क्षेत्र में ही वन विभाग द्वारा खरीदी हो रही है – इससे संग्रहण संभावित मात्रा से काफी कम है।
- इन पूरी प्रक्रियाओं में 'सहकारी संघ' के तत्वों का या लोगों के दीर्घकालीन सक्षमीकरण का कोई विचार नहीं है।



CFRR दावे की मान्यता के बाद सामुदायिक वन प्रबंधन के बारे में ग्रामवासी मंथन करते हुए

### वन निर्भर आजीविकाओं की स्थिति:

- लघु वनोपज पर निर्भरता बरकरार है। ग्रामीणों की आमदनी में लगभग 25 प्रतिशत लघु वनोपज से है।
- लेकिन उनके घटने से ग्रामवासी रसायनिक खेती, खेती-सम्बंधित मजदूरी, तथा पलायन पर निर्भर होते जा रहे हैं।

## सुझाव:

1. सुस्थिर आजीविका के लिए जितनी जल्दी हो सके CFRR ग्राम सभा के माध्यम से वन प्रबंधन शुरू करना अत्यावश्यक है।
2. वन अधिकार कानून के बाद छत्तीसगढ़ लघु वनोपज महासंघ (CGMFPEFED) के लिए कानूनन आधार नहीं है। इसको मानते हुए ग्राम सभाओं को (महाराष्ट्र गवर्नर के आदेश के अनुरूप) खुद से विपणन करने का विकल्प दिया जाना चाहिए
3. पूरे जिले में CFRR की प्रक्रिया पूर्ण होने पर धीरे-धीरे (शायद 5 साल की अवधि में) ग्राम सभा या उनके अपने फ्रैंडरेशन के तहत विपणन की व्यवस्था तैयार होनी चाहिए।

# Convergence of CFRR with NTFP-based livelihoods: Study Report of NTFP Collection and Trade in Bastar District, Chhattisgarh providing basis for Policy Brief

## 1 INTRODUCTION

**Existing state support for NTFP-based livelihoods:** The state of Chhattisgarh has implemented several policies and programmes to forest-dependent livelihoods, including cooperative marketing, minimum support prices and state procurement of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). In 2019, the Chhattisgarh government hiked the collection wage for tendu leaf by a significant 60% to Rs. 4,000/- per standard bag of 50,000 leaves, benefitting 12.5 lakh tendu leaf gatherers, mainly forest-dwelling Adivasis. The state government has also been implementing in earnest the Union Government-supported Minimum Support Price for Minor Forest Produce (MSP for MFP) Scheme. It established a support price for 14 NTFP supported from its own budget over and above those supported through Union Government funds.<sup>1</sup> In his Independence Day Speech in August 2021, the chief minister stated that the state had procured NTFP worth Rs. 1,173 crores since 2019, accounting for 74% of all state-funded NTFP procurement in the country, and establishing Chhattisgarh as India's leading state in enhancing NTFP-based livelihoods.<sup>2</sup> The state is vigorously implementing another Union Government-supported NTFP scheme, the Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana, which envisages strengthening NTFP processing and marketing infrastructure through Self Help Groups (SHGs) comprising women NTFP collectors. Recognition for its efforts has followed, with Chhattisgarh receiving as many as ten national awards from the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (TRIFED) relating to the procurement, processing, and marketing of NTFP.

**CFRR recognition:** Meanwhile, Chhattisgarh also claims distinction in its vigorous implementation of community forest rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. The state government claims to have recognised more than 44,000 community forest rights claims. Since 2019, the government has trained its focus on Community Forest Resource Rights (CFRR), which represent the most empowering of the provisions of the FRA by providing rights of sustainable forest management and conservation to the Gram Sabha.

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<sup>1</sup> The numbers here are cited from the annual report of the Chhattisgarh Minor Forest Produce (Marketing and Trading) Federation Ltd. (CGMFPFed) for the year 2020-21. The MSP for MFP scheme does not include the tendu leaf, which is wholly state-procured through a pre-existing network of co-operative societies under the CGMFPFed.

<sup>2</sup> The text of the Chief Minister's Independence Day 2021 speech is available online at [https://dprcg.gov.in/post/1629008171/स्वतंत्रता\\_दिवस-2021\\_-\\_माननीय\\_मुख्यमंत्री\\_श्री\\_भूपेश\\_बघेल\\_का\\_स्वतंत्रता\\_दिवस\\_संदेश\\_-\\_पुलिस\\_परेड\\_ग्राउण्ड\\_रायपुर\\_](https://dprcg.gov.in/post/1629008171/स्वतंत्रता_दिवस-2021_-_माननीय_मुख्यमंत्री_श्री_भूपेश_बघेल_का_स्वतंत्रता_दिवस_संदेश_-_पुलिस_परेड_ग्राउण्ड_रायपुर_)

CFRR holds immense potential for enhancing environmentally sustainable forest-based NTFP livelihoods. As of October 2021, as per official data, the state has recognised more than 4,000 CFRR claims, making it among the top three states in the country in CFRR recognition. CFR-based forest governance visualises all forest-dwellers as having rights over all NTFPs, and their Gram Sabhas as the smallest unit of decision-making, both for forest management and for NTFP marketing.

**Need for convergence:** There is a possibility of tension between existing NTFP policies and CFRR-based forest governance. Current NTFP policies use the Primacy Cooperative Societies (PCS) of the CGMFPFED as the building block. But post-FRA, the PCSs have no rights to collect and market NTFPs—these rights now rest with forest-dwellers and their Gram Sabhas. Moreover, PCSs do not actually function in the spirit of cooperative societies—i.e., owned and run by NTFP collectors. Rather, they end up becoming extensions of the Forest Department. The PCSs also cannot ensure forest regeneration or sustainable harvest of NTFPs. On the other hand, CFRR incorporates a broader understanding of the well-being of both forest-dwellers and the forest, and represents inclusive decision-making as well as environmental sustainability as core values. There is therefore a need for convergence between the two approaches: economic policies that support NTFP marketing, and the FRA that confers NTFP ownership to forest-dwellers and decision-making to their Gram Sabhas.

Our study seeks to integrate the spirit of the recent strides made by the Chhattisgarh government in promoting NTFP-based livelihoods with that of the CFRR provision of the FRA. To attempt this synthesis, we evaluate the impact of recent state interventions promoting NTFP-based livelihoods in the wider context of diverse Adivasi livelihoods and the larger NTFP trade that is dominated by private traders, and identify roles that CFR Gram Sabhas can play to improve NTFP-based livelihoods.

## 2 BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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NTFP gatherers in India, chiefly forest-dependent people numbering around 100 million, have historically been price-takers in the NTFP trade (MoEF and MoTA 2010). An overwhelming majority of forest-dwellers belong to Adivasi or Scheduled Tribe communities. They have remained highly vulnerable to exploitation by lower-rung officials as well as private traders doubling up as moneylenders on account of a lack of literacy and poor knowledge of forest laws.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the last five decades have been witness to multiple state-led initiatives to address Adivasi exploitation in the NTFP trade. One of the earliest initiatives in this regard was the establishment of co-operative societies called Large-scale Adivasi Multi-Purpose Societies, better known by the acronym LAMPS, from 1974 onwards in the wake of the recommendations of the Bawa Committee (Lele and Rao 1996; Gowda 1999).

In Chhattisgarh (or rather in undivided Madhya Pradesh), the LAMPS approach was superseded by the full cooperativisation of NTFP collection through the formation of 1,947 Primary Cooperative Societies, federated into 44 District Minor Forest Produce Unions, and

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<sup>3</sup> The exploitation of Adivasis by traders in Bastar has been documented by anthropologists (see Sundar 2007) as well as a former District Collector of undivided Bastar (see Krishna 2021).

the state-level Madhya Pradesh Minor Forest Produce (Trading and Development) Federation (MFPFED). In practice, this network of minor forest produce co-operative societies has functioned more like an arm of the state government, involved in the procurement and marketing of tendu leaf and sal seed over which the state maintains a monopoly, and it treats tendu leaf collectors as labourers who are paid collection wages rather than prices in the capacity of producers or resource owners (Lele, Ramanujam, and Rai 2015).<sup>4</sup> In terms of their governance, on paper, the PCSs are autonomous collectives of NTFP collectors. However, they are, in fact, closely intertwined with the forest department and real decision-making powers rest with forest officers. Following the carving of Chhattisgarh as a distinct state out of Madhya Pradesh in 2000, CGMFPFED is the apex federation of 901 Primary Minor Forest Produce Co-operative Societies (henceforth referred to as PCSs) and 31 District Unions.

Bastar was the site of another significant NTFP initiative in the late 1990s. A particularly energetic District Collector led a successful drive to circumvent private traders and procure **tamarind** at remunerative prices in 1999. This led to the launch of a network of 750 Van Dhan Samitis (VDS) comprising groups of 6-10 NTFP collectors who would procure locally and sell at remunerative prices to TRIFED (short for Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India) (Bhogal and Shankar 2000).<sup>5</sup> The VDS initiative was a spectacular success for two years but subsequently collapsed for a combination of reasons including a sharp fall in tamarind prices due to a bumper crop, overdependence upon the District Collector, and sabotage by the dominant non-Adivasi social groups that constitute the trading class (Sundar 2001).

The persisting problem of forest dweller exploitation in the NTFP trade has also elicited legal attention. While NTFP is conventionally treated as the property of the state, the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, or PESA, explicitly endows ownership rights of minor forest produce upon the Gram Sabha. However, this provision has largely remained on paper. The FRA envisions a still more emphatic conceptualisation of forest rights, calling for the right to recognize (among other kinds of rights), 'the right of ownership, access to collect, use, and dispose of minor forest produce which has been traditionally collected within or outside village boundaries.' In later sections of this report, we examine how far the recent NTFP initiatives in Chhattisgarh can be reconciled with the spirit of these legal enunciations.

## 3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

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### 3.1 STUDY OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to develop an understanding of forest-dependent livelihoods in Bastar District, and to specifically examine the quantitative and qualitative impact of recent measures to augment forest-dweller incomes. Bastar District has a total forest area of approximately 4,200 sq. km. and a largely forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribe population of 5.5

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<sup>4</sup> Trade in sal seed has been recently deregulated. However, the state continues to dominate the trade in Chhattisgarh through the Minor Forest Produce Co-operative Societies' Federation.

<sup>5</sup> TRIFED is a national level cooperative entity that seeks to promote Adivasi livelihoods based on forest and agricultural produce.

lakhs. As the 2011 District Census Handbook notes, livelihoods in the Bastar region reflect a combination of agrarian and forest dependence (Census of India 2015). However, pilot trips in March and August 2021 alerted us to a state of transition in livelihoods reflected in the increasing uptake of commercial cultivation based on Green Revolution technologies, as well as the growing incidence of migration and non-land-based livelihoods. These trends are in sync with recent research which suggests that Adivasi livelihoods in central India are in a state of rapid transformation (Ramani 2021).

Hence, the questions we pose in this study are as follows:

- (1) What is the extent of livelihood dependence upon NTFP in Bastar District?
- (2) How far have NTFP livelihoods been impacted by state-led procurement and support?
- (3) How can the recent NTFP initiatives be integrated into CFR-based forest governance?

We use the following five parameters to address question (2) and formulate a response to question (3):

**(a) Livelihood enhancement:** How far are forest-based livelihoods augmented in terms of income and/or reduced opportunity cost of effort and time required to collect and sell NTFP and receive full payment?

**(b) Equity:** Are the benefits of livelihood enhancement fairly distributed among male as well as female NTFP collectors of all social groups and proportionately beneficial to disadvantaged sections of society, such as landless households, widows, and elderly persons?

**(c) Financial sustainability:** Are current NTFP initiatives profitable or at least breaking even so that they can be financially sustained into the future?

**(d) Ecological sustainability:** Does state-led procurement promote sustainable harvesting practices to ensure forest well-being, which is not only inherently desirable but also necessary to sustain NTFP livelihoods into the future?

**(e) Empowerment:** How far are NTFP collectors able to exert autonomy in organising themselves to negotiate the terms of NTFP trade and manage the forest as a critical resource?

### 3.2 METHODOLOGY

We conducted fieldwork for the study in Bastar District between March 2021 and February 2022. We faced several constraints: fieldwork was interrupted by the second and third waves of COVID-19, and a long spell of rainfall well into the early winter prolonged the harvest and post-harvest season making it hard to meet NTFP collectors in the villages. Furthermore, security considerations had to be kept in mind while conducting intensive fieldwork in the forested parts of the district.

Beginning with a pilot trip in March that was followed up with a longer pilot study in August (after the second COVID-19 wave had subsided), we visited haat bazaars and conducted visits to NTFP processing centres with help from the forest department. Subsequently, we gathered quantitative data on NTFP procurement from the CGMFPFED and Jagdalpur Forest Divisional Office. We also collected additional data from the Bhumgadi Women's Farmer Producer Company.

Simultaneously, we interviewed a cross-section of district officials, managers of MFP Primary Cooperative Societies under the Jagdalpur District Union, NTFP-based food processing entrepreneurs, NTFP collectors, academics, and development professionals with knowledge of NTFP-related issues in Chhattisgarh. In parallel, we carried out field visits to meet women’s SHGs and women’s Farmer Producer Organisations that were involved in NTFP procurement.

Overall, we conducted detailed semi-structured group interviews with 10 women’s SHGs. These comprised 5 affiliated to the CGMFPFED, including 2 affiliated to the Aasna and Kurandi Van Dhan Vikas Kendras respectively. The remaining 5 were affiliated to the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) either directly or through the NGO PRADAN. This data was further used to carry out in-depth interviews with 137 NTFP-dependent households (representing more than 10% of all households at the hamlet-level) through intensive fieldwork in three villages: Kurandi and Netanar (Jagdalpur Block), and Sandkarmari (Bakawand Block). All three villages are endowed with well-stocked forest but located at varying distances from Jagdalpur. In order to understand variations in NTFP dependence, Kurandi was chosen to represent villages that lie in proximity to the district headquarters and urban centre Jagdalpur while Netanar and Sandkarmari were chosen to represent villages that lie in the hinterland.

*Table 1: Population and distance from Jagdalpur of villages where intensive fieldwork was conducted*

<b>Village</b>	<b>Population (2011 population census figures)</b>	<b>Distance from Jagdalpur (km)</b>
Kurandi	4,585	10
Netanar	1,981	36
Sandkarmari	3,052	51

Lastly, based on a preliminary analysis of the data collected from women’s SHGs and NTFP collectors, we carried out in-depth semi-structured interviews with three prominent private traders in NTFP in Jagdalpur. This sharpened our insight into the scale of the overall NTFP trade, and illuminated key issues relating to the Chhattisgarh government’s NTFP initiatives as well as the sustainability of NTFP-based livelihoods in the future.





*Figure 1: Meeting with members of women's SHGs mentored by PRADAN in Chitapur Village, Darbha Block.*



*Figure 2: Members of the Ma Danteshwari Jyoti SHG at work at the medicinal plant processing centre in Kurandi Village. The centre was established by the CFMFPPED and is being upgraded to a Van Dhan Vikas Kendra*



*Figure 3: Cashew processing plant operated by the CGMFPFED in Bakawand*



*Figure 4: Field visit to the forest near Mundagarh Village, Darbha Block*



*Figure 5: Engaging in conversation about the forest with an elderly resident of Netanar*



*Figure 6: In discussion with a group of women at the onset of the kanda or yam season*

## 4 MAIN NTFPS IN BASTAR DISTRICT

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### 4.1 MOST WIDELY-COLLECTED NTFPS

The forested areas in Bastar district contain an immense variety of NTFPs that are harvested and sold by forest-dwelling households. Many NTFPs tend to have local areas of abundance as a result of which their availability is uneven across the forests of Bastar district. Nonetheless, the NTFPs that are most widely harvested and sold include tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), mahua flower (*Madhuca longifolia*), tendu leaf (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), sal seeds (*Shorea robusta*), and amchur (*Mangifera indica*). Table 2 below provides a longer list of the most widely-sold NTFP in Bastar district as of 2020-21. Many other forest products are harvested for home consumption and sold in small quantities. These are not listed below.

Table 2: Most widely-sold NTFP in Bastar District in 2020-21

S. No.	NTFP	Remarks
1	Tamarind ( <i>Tamarindus indica</i> )	Tamarind trees are usually privately owned or part of the village commons. Sold to both CGMFPFED and private traders.
2	Mahua flower ( <i>Madhuca longifolia</i> )	Trees may be privately owned or found in the forest. Sold to both CGMFPFED and private traders.
3	Tendu leaf ( <i>Diospyros melanoxylon</i> )	Can be sold only to the CGMFPFED, which is the monopoly buyer of tendu leaf
4	Sal seed ( <i>Shorea robusta</i> )	Trade in sal seed is recently deregulated but is still dominated by CGMFPFED.
5	Amchur ( <i>Mangifera indica</i> )	Trees may be privately owned or found in the forest. Sold to private traders.
6	Bamboo	Harvested and sold in weekly markets in the form of shoots (locally known as <i>basta</i> ) or in the form of baskets and other articles. Separately, the forest department extracts bamboo for commercial sale from bamboo coupes in the forest.
7	Giloy ( <i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> )	Sold to both CGMFPFED and private traders.
8	Baheda ( <i>Terminalia bellerica</i> )	Sold to both CGMFPFED and private traders.
9	Harra ( <i>Terminalia chebula</i> )	Sold to both CGMFPFED and private traders.
10	Kalmegh ( <i>Andrographis paniculata</i> )	Sold to both CGMFPFED and private traders.
11	Dhoop or sal resin ( <i>Shorea robusta</i> )	Sold to private traders.
12	Char ( <i>Buchanania lanzan</i> )	Also referred to as <i>chironji</i> . Sold to both CGMFPFED and private traders.
13	Cashew ( <i>Anacardium occidentale</i> )	Usually harvested from cashew plantations established by the forest department. Many villages follow a rotational system according to which harvesting rights pass from one hamlet to another every year.
14	Kosa cocoon	Used to make tussar silk. Sold to private traders.
15	Tora, or mahua seed ( <i>Madhuca longifolia</i> )	Converted into oil that can be used for cooking
16	Sal leaf ( <i>Shorea robusta</i> )	Sold in the form of leaf-plates and bowls in Jagdalpur
17	Charota seed ( <i>Cassius tora</i> )	Also referred to as <i>puvaad</i> . Sold to both CGMFPFED and private traders.
18	Boda (various mychorriza with sal)	Sold to private traders or by boda collectors themselves.

## 4.2 THREE CATEGORIES OF NTFPS

NTFPs in Bastar district can be broadly classified into three: first, those that can be sold by NTFP collectors only to the state, i.e. the CGMFPFED; second, those that can be sold to the CGMFPFED as well as private traders, and lastly, NTFPs that are mainly sold to private traders or directly to consumers by NTFP collectors themselves in makeshift stalls.

The first category of NTFPs consists of tendu leaf alone. It is procured by the minor forest produce primary co-operative societies of the CGMFPFED which exercises monopsony rights on tendu leaf on behalf of the state of Chhattisgarh under the Madhya Pradesh tendu patta (Vyapaar Viniyaman) Adhiniyam, 1964. Since tendu leaf is deemed to be state property under this law, the CGMFPFED pays tendu leaf pluckers a collection wage rather than a price. If there is a profit then leaf-pluckers are paid an incentive wage, popularly referred to as 'bonus,' a year or more later.

The second category of NTFPs comprise twenty-seven NTFP items that have been procured by the CGMFPFED in Bastar District since 2019 (see Appendix 1). These NTFPs are covered either by the centrally-sponsored MSP for MFP scheme or by the price support offered by the Chhattisgarh state government. Prior to 2019, they were being sold entirely in the private domain. Since 2019, some proportion of the harvest is sold to the CGMFPFED through affiliated women's SHGs if they are present in the village, and in proximity to the harvester's residence. This comprises a small proportion of the overall volumes, most of which lies overwhelmingly in the hands of private traders called *kochiya* (small traders) or *seth* (large traders).

The third category of NTFPs includes some widely-collected NTFPs such as bamboo in its different forms – as *basta* or bamboo shoots during the monsoon, and as different kinds of baskets, mats, and containers, which are made and sold all through the year. Different kinds of mushrooms, locally called *boda* and *chhaati* also fall in this category. Sal resin or *dhoop*, which is used as incense, is another important NTFP. The *kosa* cocoon used to make tussar silk is also widely sold to private traders.

The five most widely-collected NTFP in Bastar District that are procured by the CGMFPFED are listed in Table 3 below. This list is necessarily partial for two reasons: (1) it excludes important NTFP such as aamchur, which is not procured by the CGMFPFED, and mahua flower, which is procured in minimal quantities, whereas both are widely collected and sold to private traders across the district, and (2) it counts only the proportion of NTFP (except tendu leaf) that is sold to the CGMFPFED whereas the same items are sold in substantial quantities to private traders. Dried mahua flower, which is an important NTFP in Bastar District, is missing from the list because it is almost entirely sold to private traders and very little is procured by the CGMFPFED. Nonetheless, the list provides some insight into NTFP dependence in Bastar district, and sheds light on the composition of NTFPs procured by the CGMFPFED under the MSP for MFP scheme.

For an elaboration upon some of the most widely-collected NTFPs in Bastar District, also see Appendix 2.

Table 3: Most widely-harvested NTFPs procured by CGMFPFED in Bastar District (2020-21)

Name of NTFP	Number of collectors	Average income per household (Rs.)	Total quantity procured (quintals)
Tendu leaf	38,000 <sup>6</sup>	1,240	11,779 standard bags
Tamarind	24,543	5,488	37,414
Giloy	11,484	2,446	7,022
Sal seed	7,415	4,143	15,361
Baheda Saboot	4,664	1,458	3,999
Harra Saboot	1,215	1,202	973

## 5 RECENT NTFP INITIATIVES IN OPERATION IN BASTAR DISTRICT

### 5.1 TENDU LEAF TRADE IN BASTAR DISTRICT

As mentioned at the outset, tendu leaf is treated as a 'nationalised NTFP', and the state exerts a monopoly on the trade through the CGMFPFED. As a result, village residents who pluck the tendu leaf can only sell it at collection centres or *phads* that are temporarily set up the tendu leaf harvest season of peak summer. The CGMFPFED auctions the tendu leaf rights for particular forest patches (lots) to private traders in pre-harvest auctions well before the harvest season. The auction is carried out in multiple rounds of e-tendering and begins in the winter prior to the harvest season. It is conducted by the CGMFPFED in the state headquarters Raipur. The tendu leaf procurement area is divided into lots with one lot being usually co-terminous with the jurisdiction of an MFP primary co-operative society. As a result, the tendu leaf in Bastar district is auctioned through 15 lots, each co-terminous with the 15 MFP PCSs that are clustered under the Jagdalpur MFP District Union.

During the auction, if a tendu leaf lot remains unsold, the floor price of the lot is lowered for the next round of bidding. If the tendu leaf lot fails to attract bidders and remains unsold at the end of multiple rounds of bidding, the tendu leaf is procured by the forest department at the minimum 'collection wage' rate specified by the government.

Thus, the total remuneration to the tendu leaf-plucker depends upon the bidding price of the lot. The leaf-pluckers always receive the collection wage—currently at Rs.400 for 100 bundles of 50 leaves each. Lots that are auctioned above the floor price usually generate a 'bonus' for the leaf-plucker. The collection wage is paid shortly after the collection season ends, while the payment of the 'bonus' (if any) happens a year later, after the private traders

<sup>6</sup> This is an extrapolation based on official data from the Jagdalpur District Union for 2018.

have made their instalment payments to the CGMFPFED, and all accounts have been settled.

The leaf-plucker's remuneration is diminished if the tendu leaf of the lot in question is auctioned (at a reduced floor price) in later rounds. It is affected the most if the lot remains unsold and the forest department procures the leaf directly. In such cases, the leaf-plucker receives only the collection wage and there is no possibility of receiving a 'bonus'.

Table 7 below shows the status of tendu leaf auction for the 15 MFP PCSs in Bastar District for the tendu leaf season of 2022. Only six out of fifteen tendu leaf lots in the district were sold in the pre-harvest auction. Out of this only one lot was sold in the first round, and one more in the second round. Four lots were auctioned for prices below the collection wage of Rs. 4,000 per standard bag that is paid by the CGMFPFED to leaf-pluckers. This implies a loss for the CGMFPFED, leaving it in no position to offer a 'bonus'.

*Table 4: Status of tendu leaf auction of 15 MFP Primary Co-operative Societies in Bastar District*

S. No.	PCS	Status of tendu leaf auction in 2022	Sale price per standard bag of 50,000 tendu leaves, if sold (INR)
1	Bajawand	Unsold	NA
2	Bakawand	Unsold	NA
3	Baniagaon	Unsold	NA
4	Bastanar	Sold in the first round	5,211
5	Bastar	Sold in the sixth round	3,009
6	Bhanpuri	Unsold	NA
7	Chhindgaon	Unsold	NA
8	Dilmili	Unsold	NA
9	Ghotia	Unsold	NA
10	Jaibel	Sold in the fifth round	4,109
11	Kurandi	Sold in the sixth round	3,255
12	Mardoom	Sold in the second round	5,499
13	Muli	Unsold	NA
14	Nangur	Unsold	NA
15	Sargipal	Sold in the sixth round	3,009

The fact of as many as nine tendu leaf lots going unsold results in a recurring pattern in Bastar District, in which tendu leaf procurement is typically carried out by the forest department since the lots remain unsold. This doubly diminishes the remuneration to the leaf-plucker. As several of the Prabandhaks of the PCSs recounted, in addition to being deprived of the 'bonus' wage, the leaf-plucker is unable to sell as many leaf-bundles as they would like to. This is because the collection centre (*phad*) is wound up well before the tendu leaf season ends, because the forest department lacks the financial capacity and interest to buy and process the harvested leaves and have them safely stored before the monsoon rains commence.



It is unclear why a majority of tendu leaf lots in Bastar District remain unsold. Tendu leaf from sal-dominated forests is considered to be of high quality and fetches a higher price from private traders. The fact of tendu leaf lots going unsold or being sold at prices below the collection wage represents a considerable loss of livelihood to the forest-dwelling residents of Bastar District.

The widespread dissatisfaction due to the low collection wage (notwithstanding the hike in collection wage in 2019) and the absence or delayed payment of the 'bonus' was a major factor leading to the demand of Gram Sabhas in central Chhattisgarh to allow them to carry out tendu leaf sale directly to private traders. More than 50 Gram Sabhas in Rajnandgaon District refused to sell tendu leaf at the collection centres set up through the CGMFPFED in the summer of 2022. They challenged the legitimacy of the state monopoly over the tendu leaf in the context of the FRA and the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, or PESA, which assign ownership over all NTFP to the Gram Sabha. These Gram Sabhas were also motivated by the success of Gram Sabhas in the neighbouring Gadchiroli District of Maharashtra, which have been selling tendu leaf directly to private traders following the recognition of CFRR.

Given the increasing number of villages in Bastar District achieving CFRR recognition, people's livelihoods will be significantly augmented if they are given the opportunity to withdraw from inefficient state control over the tendu leaf and, instead, supported by the state to develop the capacity to engage in tendu leaf trade directly.

## **5.2 MSP FOR MFP SCHEME**

Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of Value Chain for MFP, otherwise known as the 'MSP for MFP Scheme,' is a central government scheme that was started by the Ministry of Tribal affairs in 2013. The scheme was introduced mainly as a solution for the low and fluctuating prices of non-nationalised NTFPs (i.e., those other than tendu leaves, sal seeds, and a few others). It also sought to address other issues faced by primary collectors of NTFP, such as lack of storage spaces, lack of marketing infrastructure, and exploitation by middlemen.

Under this scheme, Primary Procurement Centres were set up, where NTFP collectors could directly sell their produce at the declared MSP, without going through any middlemen. The scheme also authorised Primary Procurement Agents to help with procurement at the ground level and to report the MSP in marketplaces so that people would be aware of it. Through these measures, the scheme aimed to bypass the network of middlemen, reduce systems of informal credit that people were bound by, and increase prices of NTFP in the market.

In Chhattisgarh, the MSP for MFP scheme has been implemented through the CGMFPFED network of minor forest produce co-operative societies. In practice, NTFPs are purchased by women's SHGs in villages or weekly markets (*haat*) and sold to the CGMFPFED which stores and auctions the produce. Many of these women's SHGs were affiliated to the CGMFPFED even prior to the vigorous implementation of the scheme since 2019. Under the

MSP for MFP scheme, the women's SHGs are classified into village-level and *haat*-level SHGs in accordance with their scale of operations. The *haat*-level SHGs procure NTFPs in greater quantities by virtue of being located in a village that is also the site a *haat bazaar*. They are also expected to carry out some degree of primary processing, something that is optional for village-level SHGs. Members of both types of SHGs receive separate commissions for procurement, primary processing, and secondary processing.

### 5.3 VAN DHAN YOJANA

The Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana is a central government scheme launched in April 2018, implemented by TRIFED as the nodal agency at the national level. The scheme was introduced as an attempt to strengthen the MSP for MFP scheme, and hence focuses on training and value addition, which are two components of NTFP trade that are not addressed by the MSP scheme. Van Dhan Yojana aims to set up Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK) clusters, where each cluster has 15 Van Dhan SHGs of 20 primary collectors each.

In Chhattisgarh, 139 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) have been set up and out of these, 10 are in Bastar. The forest department is the nodal department and the CGMFPFED is the implementing agency and the state mentoring organization. There are 15 NTFP that are officially supposed to be procured by Van Dhan Kendras in Chhattisgarh: tamarind, mahua, chironji, myrobalan, amla, chirota, lac, kalmegh, sal, honey, kosa, tulsi, dori, char, and nagarmotha.

The district implementing unit, which, in Chhattisgarh, is the CGMFPFED, is to provide every Van Dhan SHG with equipment for collecting as well as processing NTFP. Some equipment is general and can be used for a number of NTFPs, such as pulpers and seed removers, and some is specific to only certain NTFP, such as a stamen remover for mahua flowers. The CGMFPFED also must organize training programs on collection, value addition, branding, and marketing and every SHG is to develop their own plan to process and market their products in local supply chains.

In Bastar, some SHGs that were already procuring and processing NTFP for the CGMFPFED have been upgraded as Van Dhan SHGs. These SHGs have now received additional equipment and funding from the Van Dhan Yojana. They also receive a much greater amount of NTFP to process, because they are not only procure it themselves but also receive supplies from the village and *haat*-level SHGs discussed in the previous sub-section. They may also receive supplies from District Union. The SHGs sell their produce to the minor forest produce primary co-operative society (PCS) under whose jurisdiction they function. The PCS transports the goods either to a Van Dhan Vikas Kendra it is linked to, or to a storage facility, which is either a godown or cold storage.

Van Dhan SHG members are paid a commission according to the amount of NTFP they process. However, the SHG bears the cost of all raw materials and logistics. Their finished produce is sold at the Sanjeevani Mart in Jagdalpur, for which the Mart charges a commission of 31.5%. This is subtracted from the amount the SHG is paid.

The Van Dhan SHG works broadly in tandem with the village- and haat-level SHGs discussed earlier. The village-level SHG is tasked with the job of raw NTFP procurement. The haat-level SHGs carries out procurement as well as primary processing. The Van Dhan SHG is involved in secondary processing and preparation of final products ready for sale. This convergence among the three types of women’s SHGs is illustrated in Figure 7 below. However, all SHG members tend to depend upon CGMFPFED or forest department staff to know when to collect which NTFP or what NTFP to process. They do not operate autonomously and tend to follow top-down instructions.

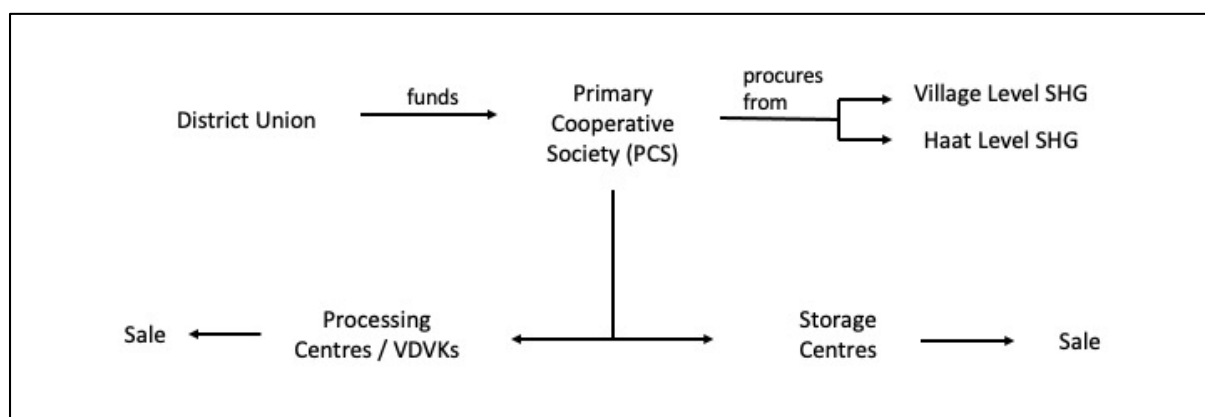


Figure 7: NTFP procurement through women’s SHGs under the MSP for MFP scheme and the Van Dhan Yojana

Admittedly, operations under the Van Dhan Yojana are still nascent since the physical infrastructure is still being built. The Van Dhan SHGs are in a phase of mentoring and yet to reach a stage where they may be able to take independent decisions on their own on what to process and how much. There is a broad convergence of the MSP for MFP scheme with the Van Dhan Yojana within the specific context of Chhattisgarh with its network of minor forest-produce co-operative societies. However, decisions are taken not by the members of the co-operative societies but by the executives of the CGMFPFED under the authority of the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), who is the Managing Director of the Jagdalpur District Union. Thus, the NTFP schemes that are being implemented by the state government operate more with an emphasis on distributing welfare rather than building the capacities of NTFP collectors and SHG members to understand market conditions, think independently, and take their own decisions.

#### 5.4 BHUMGADI MAHILA KRUSHAK PRODUCER COMPANY

Since 2018, another state initiative is involved in small-scale NTFP procurement. The Bhungadi Mahila Krushak Producer Company, a collective of women farmers procures, processes and sells agricultural produce as well as NTFPs. As of December 2021, 136 Women’s Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) are affiliated to Bhungadi in five out of Bastar District’s seven blocks, namely Bastar, Bastanar, Bakawand, Tokapal, and Lohandiguda. The FPOs are formed by aggregating pre-existing NRLM women’s SHGs to engage in a number of activities, including vegetable cultivation, purchase of rice, maize and other crops, and NTFP collection. The members of the FPOs do not necessarily have to sell

to Bhumgadi; they are free to sell to the government or to private traders and can choose who to sell to based on who offers the best prices.

Bhumgadi mainly procures maize, millets, and turmeric, and smaller quantities of tamarind and aamchur (mango kernel) from its affiliate FPOs. Given that Bhumgadi is still a young enterprise, the scale of its NTFP procurement is limited. The quantity of tamarind and aamchur procured by Bhumgadi through affiliate women's producer groups is given below in *Table 5***Error! Reference source not found.:**

*Table 5: Tamarind and aamchur sold to Bhumgadi Women Farmers' Producer Co. by its affiliate producer groups, 2018-19 to 2021-22*

Block	Commodity	Quantity procured (in quintals)			
		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 (till November 2021)
Bastar	Tamarind	325	442	351	407
	Aamchur	-	31	38	25
Bakawand	Tamarind	153	204	181	215
	Aamchur	-	18	19	23
Bastanar	Tamarind	51	85	103	51
	Aamchur	45	52	15	8
Tokapal	Tamarind	-	-	254	183
	Aamchur	-	-	-	-
Lohandiguda	Tamarind	-	-	45	58
	Aamchur	-	-	-	21
Bastar District	Tamarind	529	731	934	914
	Aamchur	45	101	72	77

*Source: Bhumgadi Women Farmers' Producer Company Limited, Jagdalpur*

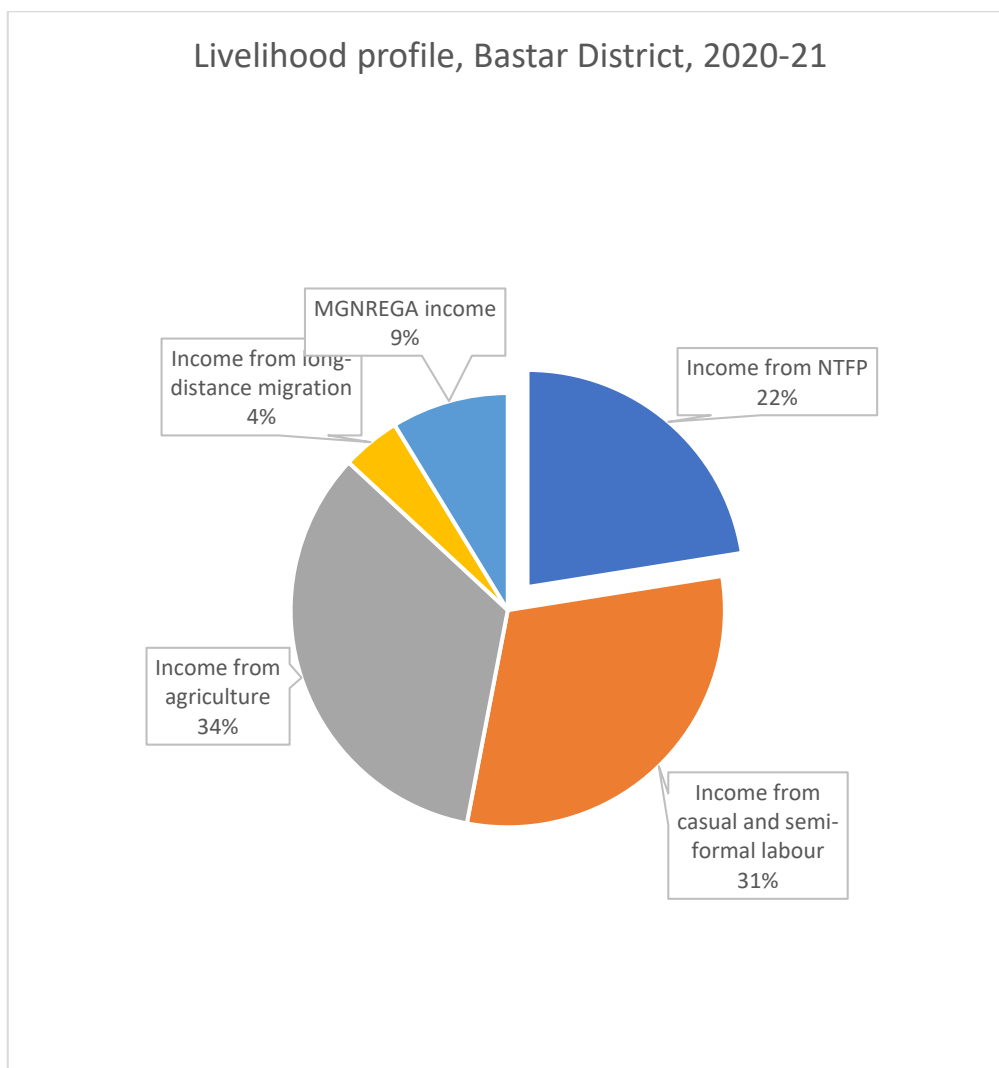
## 6 NTFP DEPENDENCE IN BASTAR DISTRICT: CURRENT STATUS

### 6.1 LIVELIHOODS IN BASTAR DISTRICT

In this section, we consider livelihood profiles of households that live in villages with well-stocked forest. Most such villages fall in Bakawand, Darbha, or Jagdalpur blocks, which have the most forest cover in Bastar District. The average annual household cash income in rural Bastar is a little more than Rs. 1,20,000, i.e., Rs 10,000 per month. Agricultural income is the main source of income followed by casual labour. However, NTFP sale remains crucial and contributes up to one-fourth of the household cash income.<sup>7</sup> Wages earned through

<sup>7</sup> In addition to NTFPs that are harvested for sale, a wide range of NTFPs are consumed within the household. These are typically tender plant shoots or *bhaji* (consumed as leafy vegetables during the monsoon); *chhaati* and *boda* (mushrooms); *basta* (bamboo shoots), and *kaanda* (yams). Although agriculture is the primary source of livelihood, NTFP dependence for own consumption is universal regardless of landholding. All households collect

migration and MGNREGA are other important sources of livelihood. Graph 1 below provides a snapshot of the livelihood profile of rural Bastar District.



Graph 1: Livelihood profile in villages with forest, Bastar District, 2020-21

NTFP-dependence in Bastar District varies between villages that lie in the hinterland and those that are located close to Jagdalpur. Moreover, as a source of cash income, NTFP-based livelihoods assume primary importance for households that engage in subsistence farming to provision their own household rather than to sell agricultural produce in the market. Thus, as Table 6 below shows, NTFP sales contribute to 30% of the average household income in the hinterland. However, the share of NTFP cash income rises to nearly 65% in the case of households that engage in subsistence farming, making NTFPs their primary source of cash income. Such households account for nearly one-third of all households.

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edible NTFP for food, especially in the monsoon and winter. Some households sell them in the weekly markets either to private traders (*kochiyas*) or by setting up a stall themselves.

Table 6: Contribution of NTFP income to average annual income of households living in the hinterland of Bastar District (n=91)

<b>All households</b>	<b>30%</b>
Households with no agricultural income	65%
Households with agricultural income	29%

Villages that are situated in proximity to Jagdalpur (such as Kurandi – 10 km away) demonstrate lower but, nonetheless, significant NTFP-dependence. Residents of these villages find casual and semi-formal labour opportunities in Jagdalpur, which contribute to a significant proportion of the household income for several residents. For instance, Kurandi residents derive 55% of their annual household income from casual and semi-formal labour. At the same time, they continue to derive sustenance from NTFPs. Many of them do not sell agricultural produce but they do harvest and sell NTFP. This can be seen in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Contribution of NTFP income to average annual income of households living in proximity to urban centre Jagdalpur (n=46)

<b>All households</b>	<b>13%</b>
Households with no agricultural income	15%
Households with agricultural income	11%

## 6.2 NTFP ECONOMIES IN KURANDI, NETANAR, AND SANDKARMARI VILLAGES

We compared the NTFP economies of the three sample villages, viz., Kurandi, Netanar, and Sandkarmari. This comparison gives insight into two aspects. First, it provides some insight into the impact of state-led NTFP procurement through the CGMFPFED. Second, it generates an appreciation of wider factors that have a bearing on the well-being of forests in Bastar, and highlight the lack of sustainability of the current rate of NTFP extraction. Broadly speaking, our findings show that NTFP-based livelihoods in Bastar District are enmeshed in a socio-ecological context of rapidly diminishing forest, which is partially responsible for livelihood shifts away from the forest.

### 6.2.1 MSP for MFP scheme versus Private trade

Among the three villages, the CGMFPFED has a presence in Kurandi and Sandkarmari, but not in Netanar. As a result, Netanar residents sell all their NTFP to private traders. They do not harvest tendu leaf because of the absence of a *phad* (makeshift tendu leaf collection centre) during the harvest season. In contrast, a segment of Kurandi and Sandkarmari residents sell select NTFP to women's SHGs affiliated to the CGMFPFED in their respective villages. Since a *phad* is set up during the tendu leaf season, they also harvest tendu leaf.

The CGMFPFED has a more visible presence in Kurandi. The CGMFPFED-affiliated women's SHGs procure NTFP, and one of them operates a medicinal plant processing centre established by the CGMFPFED in the past. The centre is now being converted into a Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK) under the Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana. The SHGs have been procuring tamarind, sal seeds, and an assortment of medicinally valuable NTFP. In contrast, there is a lone active CGMFPFED-affiliated women's SHG in Sandkarmari, which mainly purchases tamarind and sal seed from village residents.

The impact of the MSP for MFP scheme is discernible chiefly in the case of tamarind. Kurandi residents realised an average price of Rs. 28 per kg, closest to the MSP of Rs. 36 per kg, because of the presence of multiple SHGs purchasing at MSP in the village in competition with private traders. This is the highest among the three villages. In Sandkarmari, where tamarind purchase was more limited, tamarind harvesters divided their tamarind sales between the CGMFPPED-affiliated SHG and private traders, and realised an average price of Rs. 23 per kg. Netanar residents, who sold all their tamarind to private traders in the absence of the CGMFPPED realised the lowest average price of Rs. 16 per kg. The contrast is displayed in Table 88 below.

*Table 8: Comparison of income from tamarind sale across three villages, 2020-21*

Village	Average quantity sold per household (kg)	Average household income from tamarind sale (Rs.)	Average price realised per kg (Rs.)
Kurandi	281	7,922	28
Sandkarmari	350	8,027	23
Netanar	508	7,884	16

Overall, harvesters sell mainly to private traders because the scale of CGMFPPED-led procurement at MSP is considerably limited. Kurandi, where the CFMFPPED-affiliated SHGs purchase tamarind and medicinally valuable NTFP such as kalmegh, harra, baheda, amla, giloy, and neem from village residents, has relatively easy access to transport and storage facilities in Jagdalpur. This is denied to Sandkarmari, which is considerably farther away. Women's SHG members are often faced with further challenges in the form of their capacities to maintain records and follow regulatory procedures, apart from dealing with infrastructural constraints such as the lack of storage space within the village for NTFPs that are purchased. Large villages such as Kurandi and Netanar had merely two or three active SHGs, scarcely adequate to procure even half of the NTFP sold by village residents. Furthermore, as the case of Netanar shows, the MSP scheme is yet to reach deep enough into the Bastar hinterland.

The MSP for MFP scheme offers some benefits to harvesters of some NTFPs but private traders continue to dominate the NTFP trade. This is further evident from the NTFP profiles of the three villages shown in tables 9, 10 and 11 below, which provide an illustration of the extent of reach of the MSP for MFP scheme, and the continuing dominance of private traders, except in the case of nationalised NTFPs tendu leaf and sal seeds (although even here, the purchaser is ultimately a private trader).

When village residents have a choice between selling to the CGMFPPED-affiliated SHG at MSP and to a private trader at a lower price, they often choose the latter because the private trader usually makes instant payment or pays a substantial amount of the total in cash. In contrast, payments are made with a lag under the MSP for MFP scheme, and credited to the bank account, generating further opportunity costs in accessing the payment. Moreover, village residents are often bound in credit relationships with private traders, and prefer to sell

to them to ensure further access to credit in the future. These aspects play significantly to the advantage of the private trader over the MSP for MFP scheme.

*Table 9: Main NTFPs in Kurandi Village: state procurement vs private traders (n=46 households)*

Item	Average quantity sold per household in 2021	Sold To	MSP offered by CGMFPFED (Rs.)	Average price offered by private traders (Rs.)	Average earnings per household in 2021 (Rs.)
Tendu leaf	500 bundles of 50 leaves each	CGMFPFED collection centre ( <i>phad</i> )	Collection wage of Rs. 400 per 100 bundles of 50 leaves each	NA	₹2,166
Sal seeds	187 kg	Mainly CGMFPFED SHGs (> 90%)	Rs. 20 per kg	Rs. 10 per kg	₹3,596
Tamarind	281 kg	Private traders and CGMFPFED SHGs (roughly 50 % each)	Rs. 36 per kg	Rs. 28 per kg	₹7,922
Mahua flower	128 kg	Mainly private traders (> 90%),	Rs. 30 per kg	Rs. 25 per kg	₹3,381
Medicinal plants (Mainly giloy, kalmegh, baheda, amla, and neem leaves sold to after drying)	NA	CGMFPFED SHGs	Separate MSP for each product	NA	₹14,584
Sal leaf (in the form of leaf plates)	NA	Entirely private traders (100%)	NA	Rs. 50 to 60 per 100 leaf plates	₹17,409



Table 10: Complete private trader dominance in the NTFP trade in Netanar Village (n=54 households)

Name of NTFP	Average quantity sold per household in 2021	Sold To	Average price (Rs.)	Average earnings per household in 2021 (Rs.)
Mango kernel (Amchur)	58 kg	Private traders (kochiya)	Rs. 20 to 60 per kg depending upon quality	₹2,432
Tamarind	508 kg	Private traders (kochiya)	Rs. 25 per kg	₹7,884
Mahua flower	55 kg	Private traders, and distillers within the village	Rs. 30 to 50 per kg	₹4,568
Bamboo baskets and mats	-	Set up own stall in weekly market or sell to private traders	Price varies from one item to another	₹11,161
Mushrooms	3 kg	Private traders; also set up own stall in weekly market	Price varies depending upon type of mushroom	₹1,479
Baasta	-	Private traders; also set up own stall in weekly market	Rs. 20 per 'dona'	₹1,449
Dhoop (sal resin)	18 kg	Private traders; also set up own stall in weekly market	Rs. 200 per 'paayli'	₹3,075

Table 11: Most widely sold NTFP in Sandkarmari (n = 36 households)

Item	Average quantity sold per household in 2021	Sold To	MSP offered by CGMFPFED (Rs.)	Average price offered by private traders (Rs.)	Average earnings per household in 2021 (Rs.)
Mahua flower	360 kg	Shop in Sandkarmari, other private traders	Rs. 30 per kg	Rs. 25 to 40 per kg	₹14,757
Sal seed	349 kg	CGMFPFED SHG (67%), and private traders (33%, including shop in village and visiting traders)	Rs. 20 per kg	Rs. 18 per kg	₹4,975
Tamarind	350 kg	Private traders (> 90%, sold to one shop in Sandkarmari, visiting private traders, private traders in Karpawand)	Rs. 36 per kg	Rs. 22 per kg	₹8,027
Tendu leaf	400 bundles of 50 leaves each	CGMFPFED	Collection wage of Rs. 400 per 100 bundles of 50 leaves each		₹1,452
Amchur	8 kg	Shop in Sandkarmari, private traders in Karpawand	Not procured		₹475
Char	13 kg	Shop in Sandkarmari, private traders in Karpawand	Rs. 115 to 126 per kg depending upon quality		₹655
Cashew	59 kg	Private traders in Sandkarmari, Karpawand, and Odisha	Rs. 81 to 90 per kg depending upon quality		₹6,697

### **6.2.2 Rapidly diminishing NTFP availability**

Residents of all three villages were unanimous in their opinion that the forest is diminishing and so NTFP availability has been declining. Village residents in their thirties and forties were particularly articulate about NTFPs that have been declining since the last ten years. Their testimonies suggest that the decline is particularly sharp among NTFPs harvested mainly in the forest such as medicinal plant products, bamboo, *kosa*, *dhoop*, mushrooms, and chironji. It includes the wide variety of yams and plants whose fruits and shoots are consumed as food. Among the three villages, Sandkarmari has attempted to arrest the decline through voluntary efforts at reforesting open spaces and degraded forest patches in the village. Despite this, Sandkarmari residents were candid about many plants that are found mainly in the forest but have become harder to find over time. A list of diminishing plants and plant products is provided below in Table 12 below.

The decline in NTFP has been steady over time in parallel with diminishing forest, and has particularly intensified in the past couple of decades. The testimonies of village residents were corroborated by large private traders in Jagdalpur. By virtue of being in the NTFP trade since two or three generations, the large private traders that we spoke to were able to provide a perspective of NTFP decline over a longer time-scale of 20 years. All the private traders that we interviewed attested to the decline saying that the trend has been discernible since the 2000s. As a result, they have sharply reduced the number of NTFPs that they trade in because of falling volumes, and switched to trading in agricultural produce, which has been growing in volume. For instance, Mr. Deepesh Rajpuriya, one of the traders we spoke to, is a second generation NTFP trader in Jagdalpur. His father began by trading in 52 NTFP items in the early 1950s. This number has come down to a mere eight today, mainly because of poor volumes. Similarly, Mr. Jasraj Bafna, another large trader, observed that the volumes and quality of medicinal plant products had sharply reduced, and that he had stopped trading in them for that reason. Large private traders mainly deal in tamarind and aamchur, which are extracted largely from privately-owned trees or from village commons rather than the forest. Table 13 below provides a list of NTFPs whose volumes have sharply fallen over the past decade according to large private traders.

Table 12: NTFPs identified by village residents as diminishing since the past decade

S. No.	NTFP items
1	Kosa (cocoon used to make tussar silk)
2	Dhoop (Sal resin)
3	Sal seed ( <i>Shorea robusta</i> )
4	Kalmegh ( <i>Andrographis paniculata</i> )
5	Giloy ( <i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> )
6	Bamboo
<b>Plants whose fruits or tender shoots are consumed</b>	
7	Kurlu ( <i>Gardenia spp.</i> )
8	Koomi ( <i>Careya arborea</i> )
9	Phader
10	Doomar ( <i>Ficus racemosa</i> )
11	Kaatakuli
12	Koylaari
13	Bhelwa ( <i>Semecarpus anacardium</i> )
14	Harra ( <i>Terminalia chebula</i> )
15	Baheda ( <i>Terminalia bellerica</i> )
16	Amla ( <i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> )
17	Char/ chironji ( <i>Buchanania lanzan</i> )
<b>All tubers but especially the following</b>	
18	Kuliya kaanda
19	Sugandi cher
<b>All mushrooms (chhaati and boda)</b>	

Table 13: NTFPs identified by large private traders in Jagdalpur as diminishing since the early 2000s

S. No.	NTFP item
1	Marodphali ( <i>Helictes isora</i> )
2	Nirmali seeds ( <i>Strychnos potatorum</i> Linn.)
3	Karanj or pongamia seeds ( <i>Pongamia pinnata</i> )
4	Harra ( <i>Terminalia chebula</i> )
5	Baheda ( <i>Terminalia bellerica</i> )
6	Amla ( <i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> )
7	Tora/ mahua seed ( <i>Mahua longifolia</i> )
8	Char/ chironji ( <i>Buchanania lanzan</i> )
9	Van tulsi ( <i>Ocimum gratissimum</i> )
10	Van jeera ( <i>Vernonia anthelmintica</i> )
11	Kosam seed ( <i>Schleichera oleosa</i> )

## 7 NTFP LIVELIHOODS: KEY ISSUES AND CONCERNS

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The exploration of NTFP-dependence in Bastar District highlights critical concerns about the sustainability of NTFP-based livelihoods. Our main findings are:

- **Dependence:** Households continue to be dependent on NTFPs for both income and subsistence to a significant extent. Not surprisingly, interior villages are significantly more dependent than villages closer to town. But 'dependence', if measured by share of cash income coming from NTFPs, is significantly affected by the prices received.
- **Income:** In terms of prices received for NTFPs, there is a significant gap between promise and potential. Some households in Bastar District have been able to enhance their earnings from the higher prices offered under the MSP for MFP scheme. However, access to the MSP scheme, especially in the interior villages, remains low. Overall awareness about the scheme also remains low. The NTFP trade continues to be overwhelmingly dominated by private traders. We estimate that, even for MSP-supported NTFPs, the private traders purchase ~80% of the NTFP volume.
  - Tendu patta & Sal seed
  - MSP-targetted NTFPs
  - Other (no MSP) NTFPs
- **Empowerment:** Although the MFPPED system is supposedly based on 'cooperative societies of NTFP collectors' as the building block and has been in operation for more than 30 years, **there has been no empowerment of the NTFP collectors to stand on their own feet.** The state's NTFP initiatives demonstrate a **welfare mindset** in which the state plays the role of the benefactor upon whom beneficiaries remain dependent. The size of the PCS, that typically includes 20-30 villages also makes it impossible for them to really function as a cooperative society, as the members simply cannot be in face-to-face contact on a daily or even weekly basis (thus violating Ostrom's key design principle for successful collective action). Similarly, the women's SHGs have limited decision-making powers. Rather, they are only agents in a top-down system that is *de facto* controlled by the forest department. In fact, on the ground, village residents remain largely unaware of the existence of the CGMFPPED or the minor forest produce primary co-operative societies, and identify NTFP procurement and processing by women's SHGs as a forest department activity.
- **Ecological sustainability:** The forest (and especially its NTFP resource) in Bastar District is degrading. As a result, the availability of NTFPs is also declining. The trend has been visible since at least the early 2000s but seems to have become particularly rapid over the past decade. There are at least three critical factors contributing to diminishing forest extent and/or quality as identified by village residents and corroborated by NTFP traders. These are:
  - Timber extraction or coupe-felling by the forest department: Village residents identify coupe-felling with the destruction of climbers such as *siyaadi* (*Phanera vahlii*) and the replacement of sal (*Shorea robusta*) with plantations of teak (*Tectona grandis*) which modifies the floral composition and acts in

concert with growing demographic pressure to suppress native species of plants. Coupe-felling is also associated with the ingress of lantana (*Lantana camara*), a light-loving plant that enters forest patches with selective logging, and further contributes to the suppression of native plant species.

- Intensifying unregulated NTFP harvesting due to extension of rural road network: Some people now use motorised vehicles to harvest NTFP from distant forests and sell in more distant markets such as Jagdalpur and other large *haats* where NTFPs fetch higher prices. This trend is recent in villages such as Netanar and has intensified in villages such as Kurandi and Sandkarmari.
- Clearing of revenue forest, namely forest patches falling outside the reserved forest boundaries and inside the revenue village boundary, for agriculture, especially paddy cultivation. This factor is linked to growing demographic pressure leading to the fragmentation of existing agricultural land, and increasing mechanisation which facilitates agrarian expansion. Growing access to tractors on hire makes it easier for village residents to plough previously uncultivated land in undulating terrain. It is speeding up the process of conversion of forest land (often within the revenue boundaries of the village) for cultivation.
- There is no focus on ecological sustainability in the current institutional structure that is focused (with partial success) on procurement. JFM committees that might be in theory responsible for ensuring forest sustainability are in practice not involved in any way in forest protection and regeneration.



*Figure 8: The forest in Bastar is receding as trees are cleared for cultivation. Here, a patch at the edge of the forest in Darbha Block cleared for cultivation.*



*Figure 9: A truck loaded with timber outside the Sargipal timber depot near Jagdalpur. Village residents identify coupe-felling as one of the causes of diminishing forest and NTFP decline*



*Figure 10: The expansion of roads into the hinterland, and ease of mobility using motorised vehicles, is leading to increasing NTFP extraction. This is a sight from the weekly market in Ulnaar, Bakawand Block, one of the larger haats in Bastar District.*

## 8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The CFR Gram Sabha should become the basic building block or smallest unit for collective action to ensure both collective marketing and ecological sustainability of NTFPs.
  - a) With the passing of the FRA and recognition of CR and CFR rights, and the notification of PESA Rules, the PCS of the MFPFED no longer has any statutory authority to collect and sell NTFPs anyway.
  - b) The CFR Gram Sabha is now statutorily empowered to manage and conserve the forest resource,
  - c) The CFR Gram Sabha size is far more suited to collective action on any front, as the Gram Sabha consists of members of a single revenue village or even smaller units.
  - d) The members of the CFR Gram Sabha are the statutory owners of the NTFP and can opt to pool and sell their NTFPs. The FRA Rules also allow formation of federations of CFR Gram Sabhas if they so wish.
  - e) There is ample evidence from Maharashtra of CFR Gram Sabhas successfully marketing tendu patta and bamboo on their own, both individually or in federations.
- 2) Since each PCS covers multiple Gram Sabhas, it can serve as the office/channel of the Federation of those Gram Sabhas. But to do so, it must be authorized to do so by the constituent Gram Sabha and must be owned and managed by the Gram Sabha representatives, NOT by the FD. The assets and staff of the PCS must gradually be transferred to the Gram Sabha Federation.
- 3) The district administration, especially the Tribal Welfare department, must extend financial and technical support in the form of working capital and training for NTFP marketing and for creation and running of Federations.



- 4) The sustainable management of the NTFP resource will require the CFR Gram Sabhas to address the three problems identified above. This requires the FD to stop coupe-felling where Gram Sabhas do not wish it to be continued, and CFR Gram Sabhas to take the lead (with policing support from the FD) to reduce over-harvest especially by collectors who do not have rights in those particular CFRs. AND SUPPORT LANTANTA REMOVAL This process has already begun in some villages of Bastar District such as Mundagarh, Nagalsar, Netanar, and Sandkarmari, where village-residents have been discussing the way forward to manage the forest. The Bastar district administration can capitalise on this enthusiasm to establish positive 'models' of CFRR.
- 5) The CFRR Gram Sabhas should be encouraged to market NTFPs either individually or by forming a larger collective or federation of CFRR Gram Sabhas. The role of the district administration and forest department will be to play a supportive role with the aim of enabling the CFRR Gram Sabha to meet the twin aims of livelihood enhancement and forest conservation through collective NTFP marketing.

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**Appendix 1**  
**List of NTFP procured by the Jagdalpur District**  
**Union through 15 MFP Primary Co-operative**  
**Societies in Bastar District, 2020-21**

S. No.	NTFP item	Quantity procured, 2020-21 (quintals)	No. of NTFP collectors	Expenditure (Rs.)	MSP per kg, 2020-21 (Rs.)
1	Aati imli/ Tamarind de-seeded ( <i>Tamarindus indica</i> )	37,413.59	24,543	₹ 13,46,88,924.00	36
2	Amla - raw ( <i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> )	21.68	35	₹ 60,704.00	28
3	Amla - seedless ( <i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> )	17.13	62	₹ 89,076.00	52
4	Baheda ( <i>Terminalia bellerica</i> )	3,999.29	4,664	₹ 67,98,793.00	17
5	Baheda kachariya ( <i>Terminalia bellerica</i> )	115.23	159	₹ 2,30,460.00	20
6	Bel guda/ गुदा ( <i>Aegle marmelos</i> )	129.81	56	₹ 3,89,430.00	30
7	Bhelwa ( <i>Semecarpus anacardium</i> )	111.69	458	₹ 1,00,521.00	9
8	Cashew Grade-A ( <i>Anacardium occidentale</i> )	6.60	95	₹ 59,400.00	90
9	Cashew Grade-B ( <i>Anacardium occidentale</i> )	130.90	100	₹ 10,60,290.00	81
10	Chironji Grade-A ( <i>Buchanania lanzan</i> )	10.26	5	₹ 1,29,276.00	126
11	Chironji Grade-B ( <i>Buchanania lanzan</i> )	3.50	1	₹ 40,250.00	115
12	Dhawai phool ( <i>Woodfordia fruticosa</i> )	47.52	57	₹ 1,75,824.00	37

S. No.	NTFP item	Quantity procured, 2020-21 (quintals)	No. of NTFP collectors	Expenditure (Rs.)	MSP per kg, 2020-21 (Rs.)
13	Giloy ( <i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> )	7,022.35	11,484	₹ 2,80,89,400.00	40
14	Harra ( <i>Terminalia chebula</i> )	973.32	1,611	₹ 14,59,980.00	15
15	Harra kachariya ( <i>Terminalia chebula</i> )	0.10	1	₹ 250.00	25
16	Honey	29.25	51	₹ 6,58,125.00	225
17	Kalmegh ( <i>Andrographis paniculata</i> )	270.43	1,209	₹ 9,46,505.00	35
18	Mahua flower (dried)	0.82	1	₹ 2,460.00	30
19	Nagarmotha ( <i>Cyperus rotundas</i> )	49.04	38	₹ 1,47,120.00	30
20	Patal kumda ( <i>Pueraria tuberosa</i> )	2,179.08	889	₹ 65,37,240.00	30
21	Phool imli/ Tamarind - unseeded	550.10	312	₹ 37,95,690.00	69
22	Puvaad or charota seed ( <i>Cassius tora</i> )	17.68	125	₹ 28,288.00	16
23	Sal seed ( <i>Shorea robusta</i> )	15,360.54	7,415	₹ 3,07,21,080.00	20
24	Shikakai ( <i>Acacia concinna</i> )	2.72	22	₹ 13,600.00	50
25	Tamarind seed ( <i>Tamarindus indica</i> )	109.64	109	₹ 1,20,604.00	11
26	Van jeera ( <i>Vernonia anthelmintica</i> )	6.32	110	₹ 44,240.00	70
27	Van tulsi ( <i>Ocimum gratissimum</i> )	4.29	31	₹ 6,864.00	16

Source: Jagdalpur District Union, CGMFPPED

## Appendix 2

### Main NTFPs in Bastar District

#### **Tamarind**

Tamarind is the most widely collected and lucrative NTFP in Bastar district. However, it is not strictly a 'forest-based' produce as most tamarind trees are found within the village boundaries and not inside the forest. It is harvested in the month of March and is sold both to the state as well as to private traders. While the amount procured by the state is already massive (22,362 quintals in 2020-21), both government officials and private traders estimate that this may represent only 5-20% of the present volume of tamarind trade in Bastar District. Village households sell vast quantities of tamarind individually to small-scale private traders at the haat or weekly market. It is also bartered in exchange for vegetables and groceries. The small traders sell to larger traders located in Jagdalpur, who, in turn, sell them onward to the next rung in the supply chain extending across the country as well as Southeast Asia and Pakistan.

#### **Medicinal plants**

Giloy, harra, baheda, and kaalmegh are medicinal plants collected in smaller quantities as compared to tamarind but are highly lucrative. They are harvested in the winter months, from December till February or March. Unlike tamarind, which is mostly found inside villages and not in the forests, these plants are all found in densely forested areas. They are also slightly more difficult to harvest because they are smaller and it is more difficult to spot them within the dense undergrowth of the forest. They are sold to both the state as well as to private traders. However, not all traders engage with medicinal plants; while almost all traders deal with tamarind, there are only a few particular ones who trade in medicinal plants. They are procured by small traders at the haat level, sold to larger traders in Jagdalpur, and further sold to wholesalers or specific industries/companies that utilise them.

#### **Mahua and aamchur**

Mahua and aamchur are widely harvested and sold but are not reflected in CGMFPFED data because the trade in these two NTFP commodities remains largely in the private domain. Aamchur is made by drying and powdering mangoes. The mango trees, like tamarind, are mainly found within the boundaries of the village. However, there are also a few cases where people harvest mangoes from forested areas as well. The mangoes are harvested in the month of May. Once they are harvested, they are dried, powdered, and then sold to small traders at the haat level. They then sell it to big traders in Jagdalpur, and from there it is sold to wholesalers in North India (mainly Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Rajasthan).

Mahua is sold in two forms; either the flowers are collected and sold directly, or the flowers are processed into liquor and the liquor is sold in the market. The sale of liquor constitutes a more informal economy, as it is sold mostly within the village to other residents of the village. The flowers are sold in the market to small and medium traders. Sometimes, mahua (like tamarind) is bartered in exchange for vegetables and groceries. It is the only NTFP that is used as currency in a barter system; all other forest produce are only sold for money. Mahua flowers are mainly harvested in the months of March and April. Mahua trees can be found both within the village boundaries as well as inside forest areas.

### Appendix 3

## Procurement of NTFPs and agricultural commodities through Bhumgadi

Block	Commodity	Quantity procured (in quintals)			
		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 (till November 2021)
<b>Bastar</b>	Maize	846	2,905	4,102	753
	Tamarind	325	442	351	407
	Mango	-	31	38	25
	Turmeric	8	83	45	21
	Millet	-	21	35	21
<b>Bakawand</b>	Maize	451	2,201	3,502	408
	Tamarind	153	204	181	215
	Mango	-	18	19	23
	Turmeric	-	-	38	44
	Millet	15	5	11	215
<b>Bastanar</b>	Maize	203	1,805	1,501	105
	Tamarind	51	85	103	51
	Mango	45	52	15	8
	Turmeric	125	45	41	35
	Millet	11	221	258	328
<b>Tokapal</b>	Maize	-	-	1,105	81
	Tamarind	-	-	254	183
	Mango	-	-	-	-
	Turmeric	-	-	21	12
	Millet	-	-	-	18
<b>Lohandiguda</b>	Maize	-	-	1,602	75
	Tamarind	-	-	45	58
	Mango	-	-	-	21
	Turmeric	-	-	35	18
	Millet	-	-	41	15
<b>Bastar Dt Total</b>	Maize	1,499	6,911	11,812	1,422
	Tamarind	529	731	934	914
	Mango	45	101	72	77
	Turmeric	133	128	180	130
	Millet	26	247	345	597

*Source: Bhumgadi Women Farmers' Producer Company Limited, Jagdalpur*