

Webinar: Sustainable use of wild collected products

Draft Opening remarks -Check against delivery-

Sven Walter, FAO, 12 November 2020

I would like to welcome you on behalf of FAO's Forestry Division to today's webinar and I would like to thank my colleagues from our Food and Nutrition Division and from the International Network for Geographical Indication (oriGIn) for organizing this series of webinars on the "Contribution to SDGs through quality linked to geographical origin".

I am very excited about today's webinar, which addresses a topic of high relevance for FAO in general and the Forestry Division in particular: the contribution of wild collected products, which often come from forests, to the SDGs, and the role – the actual and the potential role - of Geographical Indication for the sustainable consumption and production of these products.

FAO has been working for decades on wild plants (some of you may also know them as so-called non-wood or non-timber forest products). We have been, and are, supporting the development of inclusive value chains, enhancing the enabling environment and improving the availability of data on the products. This work continues and aims to contribute both, to biodiversity conservation and the promotion of sustainable use, in order to improve people's livelihoods, food security and nutrition.

We must spend a few words to remember the importance of wild species. They make up a vital component of the world's biological diversity, and will be increasingly important as future crops and commodities in the face of climate change and ongoing environmental degradation; yet they tend to be marginalized and forgotten in decisions about land-use and nutrition options and related food systems.

Wild plants in particular play a significant role in making production systems and livelihoods more sustainable, more biodiverse and more nutritionally resilient: -- Today, one in seven people are thought to benefit from "wild" nutrition for food and health ([Burlingame, 2000](#)). Yet land use change, including deforestation and

forest degradation as well as pollution and over-harvesting are threatening these resources.

At the same time, in some parts of the world, wild crops are the basis of important value chains that can contribute to the transition to a circular bioeconomy. You may have heard of Acai, Baobab, Moringa, and a suite of so-called “super-foods”, which are highly valued on markets all around the world.

Many of these products are strongly linked to certain geographical environments, and can benefit from Geographical Indication schemes. But there are also challenges, not least the question of if and how collectors of these products are benefiting.

Our keynote speaker Davide will present an overview of these opportunities and challenges, and will give us some insights on what steps need to be taken to move forward.

You will also hear about some distinct wild foods and schemes from all around the world - wild thyme in France from Nathalie, several Sahelian dryland foods from Josef, the Maad fruit in Senegal from Pape and the innovative Chakra Label in Ecuador from Virginia. These examples will get us thinking about how we can use GI and related certification and labelling schemes to promote the sustainable consumption and production of wild products, while conserving our biodiversity and sustaining the livelihoods of local producers.

At the end of these two hours, we hope we can forge a common pathway on the sustainable use of wild products, which can help to conserve or restore healthy ecosystems, and to sustain local lives and livelihoods. This is even more important and timely, as we are in the Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), heading into the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and approaching the UN Food System Summit.

I wish us a fruitful session to better understand the opportunities of GI in order to promote the sustainable use of wild products and to identify concrete next steps to turn these opportunities into action and reality at scale.

Thank you.