The Importance of Flora Diversity to Local Forest Products and Rural Livelihoods in Yewa Division of Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the importance of plant species diversity to local forest products among rural dwellers in Igbogila and Joga Orile in Yewa north Local Government area of Ogun State. Cluster sampling was used as a result of scattered settlements. A total of 66 respondents were selected (39 respondents from Igbogila and 27 from Joga orile). The results indicated that working age group of 36 – 45 years dominated with 37% for male and 4.5% for female among the respondents. Aged respondents 75years and above had the least representation of 3% each for male and female. Respondents however cut across different marital background with married respondents dominating with 66.7% for male and 30% for female. The literacy level was low among the respondents with no formal education dominating with 56.1% for male and 4.5% for female. Over 63% of male and 6.0% of female respondents generated income of N75,000 – N100,000 from trading in local forest products, a condition indicating the significance of flora diversity in rural livelihoods. A total of 22 species in 13 families were reported to be useful for selected local forest products. Among selected products, firewood recorded the highest number of species. The species had multiple benefits as they could be utilized for more than a single product. The value chain process shows the value – addition to species (transformation) for appropriate value in exchange in markets for sustainable livelihood. The economic profitability of the local products indicated that N64, 294/annum was generated as net profit for pestle and mortar, N12,870 for partly processed raw materials and N101,363 using direct raw materials while N85,322 was calculated for baskets per respondent. The market structure for the products indicated oligopoly with Gini-coefficient of 0.222, the market was characterized by few sellers and variable products. It is therefore recommended that local forest products should be encouraged and developed among the rural and forest-dependent communities in Ogun State and Nigeria in general. The products should go beyond the subsistence level and enter into market economy for rural livelihoods and sustainable income through adequate fiscal measures and appropriate policy formulation. Furthermore, the indigenous knowledge system (IKS) must be improved upon through proper educational system that will accommodate IKS for posterity.

Keywords: flora transformation, income, indigenous knowledge and value addition.