

Assessing the Impact of Forest Policies and Strategies on Promoting the Development of Non-Timber Forest Products in Ghana

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ABSTRACT Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) farming is emerging globally as an important tool for establishing sustainable forest communities and supporting forest-based livelihoods. NTFPs are of great importance to millions of people whose livelihoods largely depend on them. Increasingly, forest policies of many countries are being revised to reflect the potential of NTFPs in achieving rural development and poverty alleviation. In Ghana, various forest policies have been formulated and implemented for developing a national forest estate and timber industry. However, most of the forest policies have failed to address the role of NTFPs in achieving poverty reduction in the country. Forest policies continue to remain a major hurdle to the growth and development of NTFP in Ghana. Through an exhaustive literature review, interviews conducted on various forest development stakeholders, forestry experts and forest dependent communities, this paper uses sustainability frameworks to critically evaluate Ghana's forestry policies and their impacts on NTFPs utilisation and management in Ghana. The 1994 Forest and Wildlife Policy (FWP-94) and its implementation process from 1995 to 2008 were analyzed with regard to the development of NTFPs and a number of challenges facing this sub-sector identified. The results revealed that the lack of definite policy on NTFPs has impacted negatively on their promotion and development in the country. Until recently, most of the policy initiatives were aimed at forest conservation and timber production; the livelihood opportunities of NTFPs for local communities were ignored. The paper also urges government of Ghana to effectively place development and promotion of NTFPs farming as core element of the country's forestry policy-making process and national development agenda.