

**TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF
NON-MARKETED NTFPS IN THE SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY OF
SHIFTING CULTIVATORS: AN ECONOMIC EVALUATION OF NTFPS
CONSUMED BY PWO KAREN IN THUNG YAI NARESUAN,
NORTHERN THAILAND**

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Abstract

Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) make an important contribution to the livelihood of these households who gather and consume them. In particular, the consumption of NTFPs allows gatherers to live with lower amounts of cash than if they had to buy in the market what they can obtain from the forest for free. Understanding the economic value of non-marketed NTFPs helps determine the true income of the gatherers, and the amount of extra cash that they would need if they could no longer gather NTFPs. It also helps ascertain the true value of the standing forest, leading to more rational decisions about its alternative uses. Yet, the NTFPs that are not marketed are usually ignored when estimates are made of the economic importance of NTFPs to rural populations. What might contribute to the neglect of non-marketed NTFPs is the difficulty inherent in estimating the economic value of non-marketed goods. This article describes five methods to estimate the value of non-marketed NTFPs. It then compares two of these methods with data from one-month fieldwork in two Pwo Karen villages in Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary in Western Thailand. The article concludes that the extraction and consumption of NTFPs form an essential part of Karen livelihood, since the value of the wild vegetables gathered and consumed by the Karen is equivalent to total cash incomes.