

# **The role of non-timber forest products in poverty reduction in India: Prospects and problems**

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The vast natural resources of India's forests, including non-timber forest products (NTFPs), such as medicinal and aromatic plants, leaves, fruits, seeds, resins, gums, bamboos, and canes, offer employment that provides up to half the income of about 25 per cent of the country's rural labour force. However, poor harvesting practices and over-exploitation in the face of increasing market demand are threatening the sustainability of these resources, and thus the livelihoods of forest-dependent tribal communities. This article analyses the role of NTFPs in livelihoods-improvement initiatives and considers recent initiatives intended to enhance their conservation and sustainable management. It recommends policies to optimise the potential of NTFPs, both to support rural livelihoods and to contribute to India's social, economic, and environmental well-being.