

Rain forests are sources of direct consumptive use values for many people. Although non timber forest products. (NTFPs) have marketable use values, they only rarely enter into the calculations of forest enterprises. However, these products contribute substantially to the rural economy. Yet with the establishment of products areas, NTFP collections often face restrictions. However, these ecological and socio-economic issues related to NTFPs have not been addressed scientifically. This is mainly due to the lack of information to justify the role of non-timber forest resources in forestry sector development. Therefore determination of the value of NTFP collected from the Sinharaja Rain Forest Reserve was the main objective of this study.

Four methods of primary data collection were applied for the study namely, household survey, informal interviews, direct observations and market survey. Twelve villages with varying degrees of relationships with the forest were selected for the survey.

A total of 216 households were surveyed. It was observed that resource use patterns of the villagers have changed due to the restrictions imposed by the reserve authorities. Villages differ considerably in their resource use patterns. Economic values of five forest products namely fuel wood, food building materials, kitul products and medicinal plants were estimated using shadow prices. A total of Rs. 330 worth NTFPs are being collected annually from a hectare of the Sinharaja forest. This value was comparable to what has been reported in the literature.

There is a considerable dependency of villagers on the forest for NTFPs. Therefore, any decision on the forest or the reserve state of the forest has to be associated with due consideration on the contribution of NTFP to the local economy.