



Income generation from bay leaves (*Laurus nobilis*) in forested areas

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Abstract: Bay leaves (*Laurus nobilis*) with leaves and seeds is one of the most important non-wood forest products. Over many years interest in harvesting of bay leaves has increased considerably due to its importance for food, medicine and cosmetic industries. Statistics of international trade indicate that Turkey is one of the most important bay leave suppliers. For example, it exported about 12 million kg bay leaves with worth 36 million \$ based on 2014 statistics. Harvesting of bay leaves provide an important supplementary income for forest villagers. Rural communities can collect this product in case of payment of the stumpage price determined as quite low to support rural development by General Directorate of Forestry. This study documents the emergence of commercial bay leaves harvesting in Bursa and describes the its supply chain and assesses its contribution to rural development in the area. The analysis concentrates particularly on commercial harvesters who gather the products from the forest due to their vast majority in the value chain. The first step of the study is to find out socio-economic and demographic structure of rural dwellers harvesting bay leaves in the planning unit and document the economic importance of this product for them. For this purpose, a survey was conducted with the commercial harvesters. The survey aimed to come out some information about collection activity such as the number of days picked, duration of picking, amount of harvest, percent of sold and socio-economic characteristics such as sex, age, education, income from their sales, primary source of income, being qualitative grading when selling of the products and who are the costumers. The second stage of the study is to seek the price change of bay leaves in supply chain from the harvesters to the retailers via the different questionnaires prepared for each actors in the distribution channels. All used questionnaires for each supply chain (pickers, processor, wholesaler and retailer) in this study were prepared under the European Union, Startree project. The sample actors were selected through snowball sampling technique in the field. In addition face to face interview technique was used for data collection. The primarily results showed that the villagers collecting this products are comparatively less-educated, older than 30 years old and male. In addition while harvesting activity can differ from one picker to another, on average, a picker spent about 195 hours in 24 days at 6 km far in the collection season. Besides, a picker sold about 12.5 ton bay leaves to the cooperatives which with at 2014 price would be worth 1500 Euros. Also the results figure out that although this activity is secondary income source for them, mean harvest for a picker is about 64 kg/h with worth 7.7 Euro/h which is more than five times of the minimum wage 1.4 Euro/h in Turkey. Also the results showed that the price of dry leave significantly increased from pickers to retailers.

Keywords: *Laurus nobilis*, Supply chain, Distribution channels, Rural development