

CITES & LIVELIHOODS CASE STUDY 2022

Harvest and Trade of Jatamansi In Nepal







JATAMANSI Nardostachys jatamansi syn. grandiflora



APPENDIX II



ENDANGERED



Jatamansi (also called Spikenard or Nard) is a Himalayan flowering plant which is harvested for the aromatic oil extracted from its rhizomes (underground stems). Jatamansi is native to Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, and Nepal, and grows in high-altitude alpine Himalayan regions. Jatamansi is primarily used for medicinal purposes, with smaller amounts being used for aromatherapy and cosmetics. The oil is used in hair tonics, perfumes and as a valerian (a natural sedative) substitute, with the marc (residue after oil extraction) used to make incense sticks.

Jatamansi is harvested in the wild by predominantly poor and marginalised communities living in remote mountainous regions. Most Jatamansi habitat falls within community-managed forests and harvesters are required to obtain a permit from the relevant Community Forest User Group (CFUG) with collected amounts weighed to ensure they do not exceed the

permitted amount. Most communities harvest Jatamansi by digging up the rhizomes, cleaning and drying them, and then packaging them for onwards trade. Usually, harvesters sell the product to a village or district-level traders who sell it on to regional traders in market centres of Nepal (such as Nepalgunj and Krishnanagar). These traders then process themselves or sell the product to processors or exporters, although some directly export the products.

Nepal is currently reported to be the main exporting country of Jatamansi which was listed on Appendix II in 1997. In 2017, the Nepalese Government adopted the CITES Act which was intended to strengthen CITES implementation in the country, but legal unclarity caused an unintended ban on the trade of all Appendix II species. New regulations were introduced in 2019 to rectify this and legal trade restarted in 2020 with 3,064



Nardostachys jatamansi. Photo: ANSAB.

kg of oil and 363t of marc exported to India, Pakistan, China, Bangladesh, Japan, UAE, USA and Switzerland. At the same time, however, there is currently an EU Negative opinion for importing wild specimens from Nepal, with recommendations for establishing a zeroexport quota. FairWild certification has been successfully trialled in some areas to enable the independent verification of the sustainability of harvest, ensure fair trade conditions, and enhance consumer confidence.

LIVELIHOOD BENEFITS

Jatamansi is harvested by people from remote communities who rely on it both for subsistence and income generation with limited alternative employment opportunities. During the period of the trade ban, it was estimated that 200t of raw Jatamansi were left commercially unviable, as it could no longer be legally exported. This affected the livelihoods and incomes of thousands of households (available data indicate that around 15,000 people are involved in harvesting of Jatamansi in Nepal).

When legal trade re-started, a TRAFFIC-led project which worked with over 2000 wild-harvesting households found that over 75% of these households generated cash from Jatamansi collection and earned an average of USD 352/ year from it - more than the income earned from any other non-timber forest product. In addition, the project found that adopting the FairWild Standard could increase the price paid to collectors per kg by at least 5%.

CONSERVATION IMPACTS

Jatamansi harvest often involves the removal of the entire plant, which makes populations extremely sensitive to over-harvesting. The species has been listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List since 2014 due to intensive harvesting for trade as well as habitat degradation and loss. It has been described as Nepal's most vulnerable commercially traded species. The Nepal Forest Act of 1993 devolves ownership of forests to local communities on approval of a sustainable management plan and these community forests have been found to be the most effective option for ensuring harvest is sustainable. The plant must be collected only from specific sites between October and November, with regular monitoring from the offices in charge of permits to ensure adherence to permit requirements and fines for illegal harvesting. All District Forest Officers must carry out an inventory every five years to identify the population trend and conservation status of forest species, including Jatamansi, as part of their Five-year District Forest Management Plans, which include maximum harvest quotas. The Department of Forests and Soil Conservation has reported positive conservation outcomes for sustainable conservation and reductions in illegal harvesting. Most Jatamansi habitats are managed this way.



LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A Nepali NGO, Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources (ANSAB), which supports CFUG involved in Jatamansi harvesting, has described how enterprise-oriented forest management is critical to protecting endangered species and the overall management of forests. Once any species provides livelihood benefits to a community, the community members usually become motivated to protect the species further and ensure sustainable management to guarantee long-term returns. In the case of Jatamansi harvesting, devolving authority to manage the harvests to communities through the establishment of CFUGs increased economic and sustainability benefits at a local level and provided an incentive to avoid overexploitation.

Although international trade in Jatamansi is permitted under CITES, a challenge remains that some potential import countries limit market access (e.g. the EU Negative opinion). The FairWild certification trial has shown that the use of voluntary certification schemes has the potential to improve consumer confidence by providing consumers and private sector companies with additional proof of sustainable and ethical sourcing. Such a scheme also ensures fairer prices for harvesters thus enhancing livelihood benefits without compromising ecological sustainability.

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