

# Walnut fruit forests in rural Kyrgyzstan

**A**groforestry is the predominant way of life in forested parts of southern Kyrgyzstan and walnut forests are a major part of the cultural landscape. Local farmers lease forest plots from the state and these provide a wide range of non-timber forest products (NTFPs).

NTFPs including walnuts, wild apples, rose hips and mushrooms provide an important source of subsistence food; other useful products include fire wood, hay and medicinal herbs. Collecting, processing and marketing NTFPs – mostly walnuts – is also a source of potentially high and much needed cash income for local households.

- In a year with a good harvest, walnuts form a significant part of the livelihood for households from all income categories.
- The income from a good harvest can sustain families for up to one year and significantly complements the income gained from other activities.
- Walnuts fetch considerably higher market prices than most other NTFPs; the price for 1 kilogramme of walnuts is approximately 30 times the price of 1 kilogramme of wild apples.

This income is unreliable, however, mainly due to late frosts damaging the young shoots and flowers of walnut and other species. However, there are only two to four good walnut harvests per decade on average. In years with bad harvests, only poor households get a significant part of their income from forest resources. This is because their incomes are particularly low, and they typically lack many alternative income opportunities.

The prime role of NTFPs from walnut-fruit forests is to contribute to local people's basic subsistence needs.



Due to the strong variations in yields, their role as a reliable source of income is limited.

- To reduce poverty, it is important to guarantee that poorer households have access to NTFPs; poorer households should be prioritised when allocating leased forest plots.
- Poorer households also need to be involved in processing (for example cracking walnuts, making jam, and drying mushrooms, wild apples or rosehips) and marketing NTFPs.
- It is important that poorer households also have access to more reliable sources of income than NTFPs, such as agricultural and off-farm activities, to diversify their subsistence and income sources and thus increase their livelihood security.

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## See also

*Poverty and Forestry. A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan with Reference to Other Countries in West and Central Asia*, LSP Working Paper 13, Rome: FAO, Livelihood Support Programme, by R.J. Fisher *et al*, 2004  
[www.fao.org/docrep/007/i2603e/i2603e00.htm](http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/i2603e/i2603e00.htm)

*NTFPs and Poverty Alleviation in Kyrgyzstan: Potential and Critical Issues* by K Schmidt, pages 28 to 29, in *Non-Timber Forest Products Between Poverty Alleviation and Market Forces*, Berne: Intercooperation, edited by J-L Pfund and P Robinson, 2006 (PDF)  
[www.intercooperation.ch/offers/download/NTFP-poverty-alleviation-market-forces.pdf](http://www.intercooperation.ch/offers/download/NTFP-poverty-alleviation-market-forces.pdf)

*Livelihoods and Forest Management in Transition – Knowledge and Strategies of Local People in the Walnut-fruit Forests in Kyrgyzstan*, PhD thesis, University of Reading, by Schmidt, 2007

## A Kyrgyz farmer selling walnuts in a regional wholesale market

Kaspar Schmidt

Collecting, processing and marketing NTFPs, mostly walnuts, is a source of potentially high and much needed cash income for local households in southern Kyrgyzstan

## What are NTFPs?

The Centre for International Forestry Research defines non-timber forest products (NTFPs) as any product or service other than timber produced in forests. For example fruits, nuts, vegetables, fish, game, medicinal

plants, resins, essences, barks, and fibres such as bamboo, rattans and other palms and grasses.

Harvesting, using and trading NTFPs are some of the several livelihood strategies that people with access to forest resources adopt.

Over the past 20 years, governments, conservation and development agencies and non-government organisations have encouraged the marketing and sale of NTFPs as a way of boosting income for poor people in tropical areas and encouraging forest conservation.