

Indicator 30. Value and Quantities of Production of Nonwood Forest Products

What Is the Indicator and Why Is It Important?

This indicator measures values and trends in values and production of nonwood forest products, where available. Nonwood forest products are economically important to local and regional economies in the United States. The value and production of nonwood products fluctuate because of changes in general economic conditions, societal preferences, and local or seasonal availability. Fluctuations in value and production can affect local economies and labor.

What Does the Indicator Show?

Nontimber forest products (NTFPs) include many plants, lichens, and fungi from forests, including understory species used in floral markets, for seasonal greenery, as wild foods, for medicinals, as plant extracts, and for transplants. Posts and poles, firewood, and Christmas trees are all significant secondary tree products in many regions. Game animals in U.S. forests are an important source of food to many people. As the number of people desiring naturalness both in an ecological and a cultural sense grows, the demand for and the value placed on these natural products increase. Annual or regularly collected data on domestic production and prices for NTFPs are generally not available. Information about game animal and fur-bearer populations and harvest is collected by State and Federal agencies, but national information is not generally available for all species. Prices for many NTFPs in the United States are influenced by international supply and demand, by seasonal fluctuation in availability, and by rising domestic demand.

Data on the size of the medicinal market is limited, but global markets are well developed. From July 1997 to June 1998, the three most significant native species in terms of sales were American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) at \$138 million, Echinacea species at \$33 million, and saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) at \$27 million. Food and forage species are significant products harvested from both public and all private forest lands. Black walnuts (*Juglans nigra*), maple sugar and maple syrup (primarily from sugar maple, *Acer saccharum*), and wild blueberries and huckleberries (*Vaccinium* spp.) are produced in the United States; they are consumed domestically and are exported. It has been estimated that as many as 36 species of fungi are traded commercially, but Boletus, chanterelles (*Cantharellus* spp.), morels (*Morchella* spp.), and American matsutake (*Tricholoma magnivelare*) make up the bulk of the industry. Forage grass species are particularly important to Federal and private land management in California and the Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountain, and Southwest regions, where grazing in or near forest environments is a major land-use activity and where native range restoration is a goal. Christmas trees are an example of an NTFP that has been increasingly cultivated in the United States. Some people in the United States go into the forest to harvest their Christmas trees. A tremendous variety of native plant, lichen, and moss species supplies commercial foliage, stems, branches, fruits, and other vegetation for use in the winter holiday season and in the year-round floral industry. The harvest and use of native species have a strongly regional character, particularly for the species that people wildcraft. Species availability and use can change rapidly with changes in taste and with the introduction of new items into the marketplace. The use of NTFPs in arts and crafts is an integral part of innumerable traditions in the United States.