PONT | PRESPA OHRID NATURE TRUST

ASSESSMENT OF CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS IN THE WIDER PRESPA AREA

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Prepared by

CNVP

Building a Greener Economic Environment

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAP - Conservation Action Plan
CBD - Convention on Biological Diversity
CSO - Civil Society Organization
FA - Forest Administration
FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FLED - Forests for Local Economic Development
MA - Management Authority
MAFWE - Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy
MAP - Medical and Aromatic Plants
MN - Monument of Nature
MOEPP - Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
NGO - Non Governmental Organization
NP - National Park
NPE - Nature Park “Ezerani”
NTFP - Non Timber Forest Products
PA - Protected Areas
PE - Public Enterprise
PENF - Public Enterprise National Forests
PNP - “Prespa” National Park
SWG - Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South East Europe
WPA - Wider Prespa Area

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The sustainable use of NTFP has remained a complex issue for the last several decades with almost no hope for a certain resolution in the WPA in Albania and North Macedonia. There has not been a real commitment to deal with this challenge in the WPA with a systematic and long term approach. Initiatives to deal with this issue have been isolated, of short term nature, where some have been disrupted due to sudden changes in management structures or end of funding. Despite all separate efforts the NTFP sector hasn't noted any major improvements.

NTFP have a tremendous potential to involve local collectors for establishing micro-, small- and medium enterprises through clear tenured rights, better collection methods, financial support, capacity development, infrastructure and institutional support in near future. With these efforts there is a potential to create large scale employment opportunity thereby, helping in decreasing poverty and increasing empowerment of particularly women. Development of sustainable use of NTFP could lead to a win-win situation for improvement of livelihoods/economic development and biodiversity conservation. Achieving sustainable use of NTFP requires an elaborate and gradual process, supported in the WPA. To facilitate this process care should be taken not only to meet the needs for conservation and sustainable use of NTFP, but also of the needs of the local people for better livelihoods.

The current situation of the NTFP sector is of cross border nature, where harvesters from Albania come to collect and sell informally and illegally to North Macedonia. Harvesting is often done in a non-sustainable manner, careless about the resource, one due to the lack of training, and second due to the competition among harvesters to get quantity over quality. Buyout values quantity and rarely quality. Buyout is often done via informal (illegal) buyout channels, thus it involves several middlemen. The buyout prices are generally low, with exception of fungi and those that have direct marketing like the beekeepers. The stakeholders are disorganized, though some efforts of organization exist and require capacity building: of the harvesters in Albania and the beekeepers in North Macedonia. Efforts for promotion of individual NTFP products have been made, but remained only at project level, not surviving to become actual brands, though the need is present. Support and guidance from governmental structures is very low.

The report recommends support to a process for transformation of the sector, working at the various level with the different stakeholders on general education of the public; organizing and achieving sustainability of the harvesters; promoting plantations of NTFP; supporting value adding processing and direct marketing over volume, raw export; and working with the institutions on their improvement. Further, it recommends active engagement between the administrative structures of the protected areas for partnerships with the CSO sector in order to overcome gaps in manpower and secure continuation beyond changes in management. It places capacity building and education in the focus. And recommends piloting in forming positive, sustainable examples that will lead the people of the sector to a future of sustainable use of NTFP.

This analysis report was prepared for the needs of PONT by CNVP, to serve as an overview of the current situation, past initiatives and potentials for future interventions in the NTFP sector. The report was prepared over a period of 4 months through a consultative process where a number of stakeholders have been interviewed throughout the WPA region in Albania and North Macedonia; national consultative workshops have been organized on the topic; and a process for commenting has been enabled by directly distributing the report to the stakeholders, and organizing a joint, final workshop in Stenje, North Macedonia.

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The wider Prespa area (WPA) spreads between North Macedonia, Greece and Albania. The defined geographical scope for the current analysis focuses only on one part of the WPA specifically parts of the territory of Albania and North Macedonia. This area is repeatedly recognized for its natural values. Due to its specific geographical and climate condition it has an exceptional floristic diversity with over 2,200 species and a high number of endemic plants. These resources, often called Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) play a vital role in the livelihoods of the local people. It is estimated that approximately 24,000 local people in North Macedonia and 5,600 in Albania live in the WPA for which nature conservation is not a priority. Taking into account that this area stretches over the protected areas of "Prespa" National Park (PNP) in Albania, "Pelister" National Park (NP) and "Galičica" National Park, Monument of Nature (MN) "Prespa Lake", and the "Ezerani" Nature Park (NPE) in North Macedonia, it is crucial for successful nature conservation to ensure sustainable use of NTFP resources. This report focuses on the protected areas (PAs) of the WPA.

Map of the Wider Prespa Area (PONT, 2019) map © Google Inc.

NTFPs include all biological materials other than timber, and are extracted from forests for human use. NTFPs collected in North Macedonia and Albania include: honey, fungi, lichens, berries, medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) and some are traditionally collected. This report treats the NTFPs in general and focuses on their economic, social (employment) and production potentials for North Macedonia and Albania.

For the majority of rural households in countries such as North Macedonia and Albania, NTFPs serve as a safeguard in financially hard times meeting some of people nutritional and other needs. However, NTFPs do not grow in unlimited quantities and their sustainable use is crucial for successful nature conservation.

Whether the extraction of NTFPs is ecologically sustainable depends on two parameters: their biological diversity, and their availability. The NTFP sector is highly dependent on the functionality of the ecosystems. Healthy and preserved ecosystems within protected areas have good potential for the production of wild food plants, mushrooms, medicinal and aromatic plants, and bee

products. It is of extreme importance that the PA Management makes an effort to conserve the biological diversity, as NTFPs from PAs are perceived as one of highest quality products. The second parameter, availability, is highly dependent on the local people. NTFP resources play a vital role in the livelihoods of the local people and they in turn play a key role in the sustainability/availability of NTFPs. The sustainable management and conservation of the ecosystems is of mutual interest for both the PA Management and local people.

The objective of the present analysis is to (a) identify challenges and opportunities for local actions concerning small-scale production, processing and marketing of NTFPs in the WPA in Albania and North Macedonia, and (b) develop a set of recommendations on how to maximise the success of future efforts while adhering to nature conservation needs of NTFP species.

The analysis was prepared over 4 months, starting in December 2018. To achieve its objective the needs assessment was developed in three steps, in parallel, taking place simultaneously in Albania and North Macedonia. The first step was desk research and data gathering of all NTFP related initiatives and efforts for 1990 – 2018 in the WPA of North Macedonia and Albania. Annex 1 gives an overview of initiatives and programmes in the WPA, whilst Annex 2 gives an overview of policies and instruments regulating NTFP.

The second step was a wide consultation with stakeholders, donors, CSO's and institutions in direct meetings, as a workshop in each country with invited stakeholders to gather further information.

The third step was a joint workshop where stakeholders from: Albania and North Macedonia, commented on the final draft of the assessment report.

Wider consultative meeting held in Municipality of Resen
Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

2. GLOBAL, INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Valuation of forests, worldwide, has been traditionally based on a financial appraisal of their timber stock, continuously neglecting NTFP values. Historically they are considered as minor forest products that generate seasonal and insignificant income in comparison to timber. With a changing political economy of forest resources globally, there has been growth of interest in NTFPs among conservation and development organisations for numerous reasons. According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, NTFPs have been considered as provisioning ecosystem service (World Resources Institute, 2005) that gives rise to a new view on valuation. It is estimated that around 80% of the population of the developing world use NTFPs for health and nutritional needs (Swati and Amit, 2014). This is due to the increasing recognition that NTFPs can contribute significantly to the livelihoods of local communities that are dependent on forests. Rural communities living in and around forests in the WPA, often rely heavily on NTFP for both subsistence and cash income. Forest values related to production and subsistence remain relatively important for these communities. However, in terms of poverty, the situation in North Macedonia and Albania differs.

The Ohrid-Prespa area of North Macedonia has been more developed for tourism, and additional income for many families is derived from apple orchards. Fifty years ago, many people from North Macedonia supported their families from NTFPs. Today, there are less and less NTFP harvesters who due to their level of poverty, see NTFPs as only additional income and have no vision to add value to improved NTFP utilization.

In the eyes of the people of North Macedonia, the Albanian locals, are in the position where North Macedonia was fifty years ago. Living in a country of rich natural wealth but where many people struggle to make ends meet, NTFP opportunities in Albania remain an important resource of income.

The trend of youth depopulation ongoing since the 60s, and is applicable to both countries. In addition the aging local population in the WPA is leaving the area with less and less people who traditionally use NTFPs. In the later period, when this area has been more frequently visited by international tourists seeking the last “wild nature” remaining in Europe, NTFP represent traditional and experiential values held by tourists and urban consumers.

Illyrians were the first people to have used the gentian plant to reduce fever and a long list of other health benefits. It is a case of pride for Albanians

At regional level NTFP production and trade are largely concentrated on the market of North Macedonia (for producers from both Albania and North Macedonia). Mountain tea dominates in Albania, whilst valuable medicinal herbs are sourced in North Macedonia. With the campaign of the communist regime to increase the area of arable land in Albania, the natural habitat of many plants decreased significantly. Plants were harvested without respecting any sustainable harvesting rules.

Consequently their natural production decreased significantly, such as Gentiana lutea. In parallel, increased demand on the European pharmaceutical market puts a continuous pressure on collection. Custom data for both countries show a continuous increase in collection. It is estimated that over 70% of collected NTFPs (from both countries) are exported to Germany, Italy, Serbia, etc. From Albania in 2015, 13,000 tons of NTFP were exported, worth more than €27 million. The increasing demand from the international market on the one hand and the threatened situation of valuable medicinal plants on the other, has provided the need for NTFP cultivation.

While economic liberalization has increased the scope for accessing NTFP-based national/regional and international market to meet the increasing demand for natural products, increased competition has put more emphasis on the need for quality control and resource conservation (both requiring certification).

Therefore, it is important to put NTFP valuation into perspective.

Sideritis - Mountain tea, massively collected by the local people living in the cross-border area, very often crossing illegally the border between North Macedonia and Albania.
Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

3. OVERVIEW OF NTFP POLICIES

The sustainable use of NTFPs has been addressed in policies on various levels. It has started with the ratification of international commitments (Convention on Biological Diversity, n.d.a; Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1997a; Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1997b; Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1999; Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2005) that are transposed in national strategies for nature, forests and biodiversity (Ministry of agriculture forestry and water management, 2006; Government of Republic of North Macedonia, 2014; Ministry of Environment of Republic of Albania, 2015; Ministry of environment and physical planning (MOEPP), 2015; Markoski, 2016) going through to the development of national laws on forests (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2009b), nature protection (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2004; President of the Republic of Albania, 2006), or medicinal plants (President of the Republic of Albania, 2009), all the way to developing local strategic and management plans where NTFPs are addressed as an economic potential that needs sustainable development (Schwaderer and Walters, 2012; Resen Municipality, 2012; Resen Municipality Council, 2016). And even rulebooks, and by-laws exist further regulating the activities and procedures (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2009b; Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2011). The policies for sustainable use of NTFPs exist, although

with shortcomings. First, there is overlapping of jurisdictions between national institutions, such as ministry responsible for nature and the ministry responsible for forestry. This creates a chaotic situation that transposes in the field as a burden on companies and collectors. The need for correction of this situation is recognized by institutions (MAFWE, 2006; MOEPP, 2015), but slow progress has been made thus far. Second, and even more important, implementation of the existing policies/legislation is very weak. Since NTFPs are very difficult to value, and due to the very often informal trade, there is no evidence of the financial gain (Chamberlain, et al., 2017). Therefore decision makers cannot see the potential and have no interest to enforce existing policies, since very often they are in the same administration that deals with more obvious matters, like timber.

A more detailed review of relevant policies is available at Annex 2, for Albania and North Macedonia.

4. REVIEW OF PAST AND CURRENT EFFORTS

A positive development regarding the institutional approach towards NTFP resources at different levels, has been confirmed by different stakeholders. The potential of this sector along with its contribution to the livelihoods of poor and disadvantaged people across the wider Prespa area, has attracted the attention of different donors and organizations. Some initiatives are still ongoing, many overlapping with different interventions, but many were stopped once the projects ended, because of lack of interest by the implementing party - institutions, stakeholders, and even producers. However, one key challenge is the lack of consistency in efforts when people change position, in particular when the managers of institutions change due to change of either the Government or the Mayor. A full list of different implemented projects in both countries can be seen in Annex 1.

Several important developments worth are summarised below

- Prespa Marketing Organization has been established in Albania, and dedicated to the marketing of raw NTFPs;
- Organised number of educational workshops for collection in both Albania and North Macedonia;
- Organized educational workshops on cultivation of medicinal herbs in Albania;
- Initiatives taken by producers in North Macedonia, to promote the beekeeping and the use of bee products using direct marketing tools, through projects, certification of products, etc.;
- Promotion of sustainable use of NTFP resources in the National Parks as single activities in the frame of larger projects;
- Study for mapping rosehip and bilberries in Pellister NP within the Pelister Mountain Conservation Project in 2006, study on sustainable use of NTFP in Galicica NP (Menkovic, 2008; GFA, 2009), and an Assessment of the Sustainable Use of MAPs from the Ohrid and Prespa Region (Fremuth, 1999); and
- Cross border conservation plan for mountain tea (Schwaderer and Walters, 2012) and market promotion of mountain tea in the neighbouring NP of “Galicica” in North Macedonia and “Prespa” in Albania.

Despite all efforts and supports by different donors and businesses, the NTFP sector has remained unorganized in both Albania and North Macedonia, remaining with a lack of a proper assessment of their production/collection, dependent population, and trade transactions.

All involved stakeholders in this analysis from both North Macedonia and Albania, have strongly recommended that a continuous donor support is needed for sustainable use of NTFP and sustainable economic development of the area.

5. GAP ANALYSES

Conservation and regeneration of NTFP species do not receive adequate attention in the timber-centric forest management system. Unsustainable harvesting practices along with diversion of forest land for non-forest use, cause substantial degradation of the forest ecosystems. Traditionally the whole NTFP sector, particularly its collection, trade and value for the local communities, is managed in an unsystematic and unorganized manner. Due to serious gaps existing already for a long time, the NTFP sector has remained underdeveloped in comparison to its vast potential. This gap analysis gives an overview of the major issues and challenges that the NTFP sector faces at different levels - policy, institutional, management, and collection, plantation, processing, marketing and branding.

5.1. Main identified gaps at policy level

Both countries have policy regulating NTFPs and responsible institutions but due to number of policy inconsistencies, grey areas exist even in legal provisions. The local stakeholders who have direct interest face an over-regulated sector while practice shows that the inconsistencies and overlaps of responsibilities often create space for misuse or overuse of NTFP resources. Furthermore, in both countries, plants that are on the highly protected species list are available on the market. This is a clear indicator that the current system of regulating NTFPs needs to be improved.

- Currently **in Albania there is no clear NTFP policy at national level**, which partially addresses NTFPs in reference to their ownership, benefit sharing, monopoly, transit rules, tax, conservation needs etc. at national level**.** There is no clarity of policies at national level on NTFP management. A new law on the protection of medicinal plants is expected to be adopted soon.
- Although 8.2% of all national forests are identified as high-nature-value forests, Albania still **lacks a specific legal framework for the protection of these forests,** and, within it, a mechanism for protection. Although the harvesting and export of NTFP have significantly increased over the past decade, the current legislation is inadequate to ensure their sustainable use. It does not cover all NTFP exports and it does not set quotas for allowed harvesting per area. This poses a risk of overexploitation of NTFP, which could damage significantly the forest ecosystems.
- In North Macedonia the **law and policies are in place but poorly implemented**. The institutional framework of competence on NTFPs is mainly divided between two Institutions: the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MOEPP) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWM). Each institution has its own legislative framework for regulating NTFPs that contains a number of regulations that overlap in responsibilities (see Annex 2 for a comprehensive list of sustainable use of NTFP related policies). A new Law on Nature Protection is expected to clarify the jurisdictions over NTFP in North Macedonia.
- Policies and budgets are at **state level that do not reflect the need at local level**. At local level real needs are different from those at national level. Municipal governments have the possibility to ask for exemptions to adapt the national legislation to local level, but are reluctant to do so. Additionally, the process of decentralization is still not finished in North Macedonia. In Albania, after the new Administrative Reform, Municipalities have their own staff while PNP depends from the central Government.

- Policies recognize that the potentials for cropping NTFP in **plantations are underutilized** in North Macedonia (Government of Republic of North Macedonia, 2014, p.30; Resen Municipality Council, 2016).
- **Processing of NTFP is not promoted**, with the exception as a sustainable energy source for drying and processing of herbs in North Macedonia (Government of Republic of North Macedonia, 2014, p.228).
- There is **no support or policy vision to promote marketing and promotion of NTFPs** at national level.

5.2. Main identified gaps at institutional and management level

Even though NTFP resources have not been highly valued in the forestry sector, the financial interest has been the major issue of confrontation between the Forest Department, PA management and local communities. There is limited data on NTFP quantities and therefore it is difficult for the PA managers to identify sustainable NTFP quotas.

All institutions related to NTFPs face lack of knowledge and have limited human and financial resources. There is lack of communication and coordination between different institutions in each country as well as between the countries.

- Management authorities in North Macedonia of NPs have **limited human and financial resources** dedicated for conservation and/or sustainable use of NTFP species in their territory, as that their staff and efforts are focused on the use of timber. The staff of NPE is focused only on protection since they have dedicated financing from the municipal budget.
- In North Macedonia, the management of NTFPs in forest areas is addressed in the forest management plans, outside and inside NPs, and these plans affect the zones for sustainable use in the NPs. These forest management plans include a section dedicated to NTFPs: however the **assessment of NTFPs is not conducted** since the focus is given to timber. NTFPs are neglected as important and the data in the forest management plans are simply rewritten from an older plan, without checking the actual situation in the field. There is an initiative in 2019, NP “Pelister” NTFP assessment also extends to NPE. This year there is an initiative in NP “Pelister” to overcome this lack of base data (BFSD, 2018).
- There is **hardly any control of harvesting in Albania**. PNP; is managed by the administration of protected area based on a 10 year management plan (2014 - 2024). That includes studies for MAPs. However, the staff of PNP lack capacities and knowledge on the management of MAPs, and the inventory of MAPs in the National Park is missing.
- **Inadequate capacity and knowledge on NTFP management in NPs -** Most of the NPs employees are forestry engineers and their education is mostly timber oriented. As a result the management systems are unable to meet the requirement of much broader, integrated and complex challenges. The PNP in Albania has taken steps to deal with these issues, and is in the process of employing two additional staff that, among other things, will address NTFP issues.
- Concern is expressed by the donor community in North Macedonia that the **often changing management of the NPs creates a difficult situation**, sometimes leading to actions contrary to signed donor support contracts and/or showing lack of continuity in implementation of donor supported projects and/or management plans.
- **No stimulation for associations**, of NTFP businesses. Though most NTFP harvesters and businesses remain unorganized, the beekeepers do have associations that have low member

numbers. Fault is seen in the system that does not encourage and stimulate the association of NTFP businesses.

- There is a **need for support of innovative businesses in the area of NTFPs** that could start as pilot projects. At the moment only beekeeping is subsidized in North Macedonia, along with the establishment of new plantations of aromatic plants in Albania and North Macedonia. But support is needed for all other NTFP businesses.
- **Inter-institutional communication is missing** at horizontal level between PAs and other non-protected areas Managing Authorities (MA) in determining the price of the premium for NTFP/kg purchase in particular between the NPs and the Forest Administration (FA). It is also missing at vertical level between Ministries and the MAs. The PNP staff in Albania depend on the central-level Directorate at the state Environment Ministry.

Gentianae Radix - Gentian root, collected in one of the National Parks in WPA area, packed and sold on the market in North Macedonia. The Gentian root has numerous therapeutic benefits and therefore it is highly demanded by the pharmaceutical industries. This medicinal plant is on the highly protected species list in North Macedonia. Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

- **Insufficient coordination between institutions**.
  There is insufficient coordination between the Forest Police (in North Macedonia only), the Police, and the PAs service, though they all have jurisdiction to ask and check for permits for NTFP harvesting. The fact is that the locations and the time where harvesting is done is known for almost each species of plants and fungi. Therefore it is possible to prevent NTFP poaching and enforce sustainable, or at least regulated use.
- **Insufficient transparency of institutions**. Stakeholders consider that the institutions do not provide sufficient transparency for their work.
- Even though policy documents foresee integration of NTFP conservation measures the **protected area MPs do not have sufficiently clear links in their objectives to NTFP sustainable use**. They are aware of NTFP potentials but are not going deeper in mapping (with exception to NP “Pelister” where this work is undergoing), identifying quantities and setting a monitoring system for their sustainable collection. Reliable data on NTFP available quantities are missing to allow managers to identify sustainable NTFP quotas.

- **Applicable NTFP management protocols are hardly available and/or developed**. NTFP growth is seasonal, varying from year to year and therefore not easily monitored. Current NTFP management protocols and guidelines do not clearly define their use which results in poor management practices that may lead to overuse of certain species.
- **NTFP collection from private ownership or land in communal use is not regulated.**
- **There is insufficient research** on the NTFP related species and their habitats, as well as the socio-economic aspect of NTFP. Basic data are not available for planning with some exception on mountain tea, and for other research activities undertaken in the NPs.
- **Poor progress in development** - and this is very much required to develop the NTFP sector. Some commercially important NTFPs such as mountain tea, have only one market use which is why they are vulnerable to fluctuations in demand. There are many NTFPs that either remain unsold or sold at a lower price due to absence of better marketing options. Unfortunately the research institutions / projects / organizations have not been able to address these issues successfully.
- **No institution for herbal/traditional medicine** that can offer support and continue the traditional use of aromatic and medicinal herbs.
- **No attention to NTFPs or entrepreneurship in education.** There is no programme to connect young people with sustainability and/or entrepreneurship, from primary to high school. Teachers would like to cover these topics, but have no materials to work with. Within the environmental sections of schools only waste is treated since there is support for this; but, there is no support for NTFPs or to allow visits to protected areas.

5.3. Main identified gaps at collection level

Working with NTFP is a seasonal engagement and not a primary business for almost all local households. The local population is aging, young people are continuously leaving the WPA, and the traditional knowledge in dealing with NTFPs is decreasing and poor attention of collectors to NTFP conservation. There is low knowledge of local people about the value of NTFPs, and people seek income, whenever possible, from other activities such as apple orchards.

Women are important value chain actors, acting as input suppliers, cultivators, harvesters, consolidators and processors/exporters.

Both government and non-government organizations (NGO) have attempted to promote cooperation among primary collectors in the form of cooperatives and producer groups which, despite its limited financial returns has given NTFPs collectors a new identity and self-confidence along with knowledge. They need more support and enabling mechanisms to grow financially.

- **Local people engaged with NTFP are aging.** There are no young people involved in NTFPs in general. Working with NTFPs is hard work, and is primarily done by older people with low income, who see it as additional income. Additionally, young people leave the WPA primarily for education and then for work in either Skopje or Tirana. The young people that do stay see the work in NTFPs as too labour intensive and not worth the income generated.
- While in Albania women are primarily engaged with NTFPs, in North Macedonia there is approximately equal gender involvement. However the **role of women needs empowerment**, and there is a need for better organization of women to achieve this.
- There is **no accessible registry of harvesters** in North Macedonia. Currently there are several types of registries: in North Macedonia there is a registry of people who ask for harvesting

permits that is kept at the PA and at the PENF. While in Albania there are informal associations of NTFP harvesters.

- **Several harvesting problems have been identified**; these include: harvesting NTFPs at an improper time, usually before they are fully ripe or developed; overharvesting, which is critical when roots are removed; improper harvesting techniques that damage the final product; improper post-harvesting and storage techniques; non-compliance with the quota system, and prohibited plants list; and overgrazing.
- **Engagement with NTFPs is seasonal**, starting in the early spring, and finishing in late autumn so it cannot be considered as main income for many local families.
- **Absence of sustainable harvesting protocols** - Sustainable harvest means, *'the level of harvest at which a species can maintain its population at natural or near - natural levels and the harvest will not change the species composition of the community'.* Understanding sustainable harvesting is not easy, and suitable robust rules of thumb should be followed for different plant parts – roots, leaf, bark, flowers, gums & resin, whole plant etc. Sustainable harvesting protocols have not been developed for most NTFPs. Those that are available remain unpractised in many cases resulting in **poor attention of collectors to NTFP conservation.**
- **Local people avoid getting permits from PENF and sometimes from NP "Pelister"** (North Macedonia), even though annual permits cost 300 MKD and 500 MKD respectively. Reason for this is stated to be the lack of an office of NP "Pelister" in Resen. While in "Prespa" NP permits are issued without difficulties and regularly. NP "Galičica" is not issuing permits.
- There is **no example for sustainable use of NTFPs** in the region. Though there are locals that strive to achieve this, they need further support to become real examples of sustainable use. Such an example is needed, whether from the country, the region or internationally, to show locals communities that the sustainable use of NTFPs can provide a viable source of income.

5.4. Main identified gaps at plantation level

Plantations of NTFPs remain a thing of the past in North Macedonia, while in Albania there are working examples. There are several factors why this is so: knowledge is a primary reason; lack of capacity; and for many a lack of land. A further issue concerns which of the NTFP species can be turned into a plantation.

Mountain tea plantation in Albania, photo: CNVP

- There are **studies about making plantations of popular NTFPs,** such as mountain tea (GFA, 2009), rose hip (GFA, 2009), bilberry, juniper or the great yellow gentian, but they are not accessible for the local population, and cannot be applied in practice.
- **No support for NTFP** processing businesses. State and local institutions provide little to no support to small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) that are involved in the sustainable use of NTFPs. SMEs are not guided through compliance procedures, but rather simply punished by inspectors. SMEs need assistance and guidance on how to go through institutional procedures in order to achieve legal compliance.
- **Lately, medicinal plants have received some special attention** which helps in promoting their commercial cultivation, but not the NTFP sector as a whole.
- Generally, there is **low knowledge of local people about the value of NTFPs.** Though harvesters and beekeepers have knowledge, the general population does not. For the local farmers, agriculture crops seem financially viable, whereas the planting of medicinal herbs does not, because they have no information that the herbs are valued sometimes 100 times more per kilogramme than agriculture crops. This extends also to some institutions as the case for the PENF "Prespadrvo" Forest Unit in Resen, North Macedonia, where NTFP are seen as something without potential for profit. Thus they are not interested to deal with them.
- **NP's administration in North Macedonia do not have the capacity to implement plantations** of aromatic and/or medicinal herbs, unlike NP in Albania. Gaps are identified within the NP in North Macedonia which does not have the manpower, capacity, skills or finance to engage in NTFP plantations.
- **Local people (primarily NTFP harvesters) do not engage in NTFP plantations** because of the high costs of investment and the land that is needed.
- **In Albania, the pace of cultivation is slowing** in many areas because requests for support from the government subsidy scheme have drastically decreased; (value chain actors interviewed confirmed this decrease). The main problem is linked with the surplus of specific products (such as sage) compared to the market's need for product quantity and quality.

5.5. Main gaps identified at processing level

The processing of NTFPs is very limited, with the exception of some companies that buy NTFPs and process small quantities of NTFP into a value-added products. The focus of these companies is volume sales that go primarily for export. However processing is present at an informal level where local, traditional medicine experts promote the healing powers of the medicinal plants from this region. These people rarely turn their informal activity into a registered business, and when they do, they face lack of support and obstacles that make their business legally compliant. No association exists to unite these people/businesses and there is questionable success for any attempt to unite them into an association.

Drying of Mountain tea cultivated in Albania, photo: CNVP

- Only **low level processing of herbs and mushrooms**.
  While bee products are packed and sold in various forms with added value, other NTFPs such as herbs and mushrooms are sold in raw or dried form (in North Macedonia). In rare cases, when the purchasing company is not able to make a sale to an exporting company, they use the products to make something else e.g. rakija from blackberries.
- **Inadequate infrastructure, and post-harvesting facilities/skills.** In both places in the Prespa area, neither the National Parks nor the producers have proper storage facilities. Most NTFPs are seasonal products, and several products require immediate disposal in the absence of appropriate storage facilities. This means that the producer is vulnerable to either not sale or sale at a low price. Further, lack of value addition reduces the chances of getting higher prices.
- The processing of NTFP for the local market is limited to the packaging of mountain tea. There is strong potential in this sub-sector, but the **lack of large-scale, modern processing lines, and limited access to international markets**, remain the main obstacles for sub-sector development.
- With the exception of beekeepers (in North Macedonia) and the Prespa Marketing Organization that promotes different producers (in Albania), there are **no NTFP associations**. The mushroom and plant harvesters, as well as the wholesalers are not organized and have no association. These people see themselves as competitors and have a very low level of cooperation.

Products prepared from processed medicinal plants and sold on markets in North Macedonia
Photo: Anela Stavrevska-Panajotova

5.6. Main identified gaps in marketing, branding and promotion

The NTFP market is complex with unstable prices due to variable supply. Buyout prices are low due to the number of middlemen/wholesalers involved in the process. Wholesalers are focused on export. Direct marketing is limited to honey and other isolated examples. These examples are mainly informal, deal with medicinal plants, and need better promotion. Purchasing companies are middlemen in the wider picture where another exporting company is involved. Purchasing is a grey area where collectors and purchasing companies are involved, as well as informal middlemen who

buy from collectors at marginally higher prices and sell to purchasing companies which are willing to offer better prices. Borders are as if do not exist, and collectors from Albania go to North Macedonia to sell. Local people do not have the skills to engage with marketing strategies and to open new markets. Stakeholders are interdependent, but have grudges with their competitors. Organizing them into an association is therefore questionable.

Although items like mountain tea have relatively organized marketing thanks to the consistency in market demand, the picture regarding most NTFPs is less clear. Promotion is done only through isolated, local events, without a strategy and limited market access.

Stakeholders agree that the region needs a recognizable brand from the area or the sub areas of WPA, such as the NPs. People see this as a way to promote increased sales of WPA products at a higher price, and to drive bigger volumes of sales, thus generating greater income. This is primarily sought from beekeepers. The potential is there. The area has its recognizable elements and factors. However nothing has been done on this topic.

- The **NTFP market is mostly unorganized or informal** (except for items like mountain tea or some fungi), and uncertainty in market demand makes it difficult to survive with only one or two items. Lack of added value (like, cleaning and grading) at primary level causes the primary supplier to lose a substantial part of potential income.
- PA authorities and public forestry enterprises **lack market intelligence to trade successfully**. There is an understanding that a centralized marketing system is more preferable than total deregulation because the latter might ultimately go against the interest of the producers.
- **Difficult market** - The NTFP market is highly diverse, and fluctuates frequently; hence interventions based on assumptions of market stability or expectations of a stable/growing market are often non-viable commercially. This discourages private entrepreneurship in the sector.
- **The market is of a cross-border nature**, and very often informal and illegal. Harvesters from Albania trade illegally in North Macedonia.
- There is a **need for access to markets** that will provide recognition to the value and quality of the NTFP from WPA, and provide higher purchase prices that will enable sustainable economic development of the sector.
- **Insufficient direct marketing**. NTFP harvesters mainly sell plants and mushrooms to purchasing companies at low prices, unlike beekeepers who have direct marketing/sales and achieve better prices.
- There is **no assessment on the potential for supply** of NTFPs. Marketing of NTFPs is not possible to organize when the supply capacity is not known. Though factors of natural elements may alter assessments, basic information should be known. Beekeeping has this possibility for it is a controlled process. Thus beekeepers can plan marketing activities that are appropriate for the available supply.
- **Low buyout prices**. Official purchasing companies offer low prices and complain about the existence of illegal middlemen whose purchases increase the price.
- Medicinal herbs are **not used in modern medicine**. There is potential for medicinal herbs to be used as complement to conventional medicine, however this is avoided in North Macedonia by the institutions. In Albania it is not yet being discussed.
- **No marketing skills**. Local producers of herbal tea have no marketing or promotion knowledge. The Prespa Marketing Organization in Albania needs to develop its capacities in these areas, in order to be active and provide services to its members.

- **Producers losing interest in NTFP collection** - An uncertain market and reduced production as a result of migration from rural areas have reduced the interest of producers (particularly males) in NTFP collection.
- **Bee products from WPA are not branded**. Interest in branding is linked with direct marketing such as in the case of beekeeping. Beekeepers have interest in branding the products coming from the PA because of the potential for higher incomes. Even after seeing examples of successful branding, honey from the WPA is not yet branded.
- **There is no promotion of NTFPs.** There is a need to brand and promote NTFP from the region, especially products like mountain tea Sideritis raeseri, a plant specific to the WPA.
- Subsidy schemes are available for plantations of MAPs, but the procedures and **requirements for state subsidy are too difficult for local people**. In order to be qualified producers need to be organised, as well as to apply and manage activities together. But organisation and cooperation between producers is missing. In Albania, the Prespa Marketing Organization is not executing its roles and responsibilities, while in North Macedonia there is no organization

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The sustainable use of NTFPs remains a complex issue with almost no hope for a certain resolution. There has not been a real commitment to deal with this challenge in the WPA through development of a systematic and long term approach. Initiatives to deal with this issue have been isolated and of a short term nature, where some have been disrupted due to sudden changes in management structures or lack of funds. Despite all separate investments the NTFP sector has not seen any major improvements.

NTFPs have a tremendous potential to involve local collectors for establishing micro-, small- and medium enterprises through clear tenured rights, better collection methods, financial support, capacity development, infrastructure and institutional support. There is potential to create employment, thereby helping to: reduce poverty; increase empowerment of particularly women, and people from one of the poorest part in both countries of Albania and North Macedonia; and slow down migration from rural areas. Development of sustainable use of NTFPs could lead to a win-win situation for the improvement of livelihoods/economic development and biodiversity conservation. Achieving sustainable use of NTFPs requires an elaborate and gradual process to be supported in the WPA. To facilitate this, care should be taken not only to meet the needs for conservation and sustainable use of NTFPs, but also the needs of the local people for better livelihoods.
General and specific recommendations for future donor support in the NTFP sector in the WPA are set out below.

General recommendations are based on lessons learned from the analysis, and set a wider frame in which all further initiatives in the sector should be taken.

- **Nature conservation actions or projects should be developed and implemented in close cooperation with local people**. Taking into account the importance of NTFPs for the rural family economy, future nature conservation projects/activities should ensure that local peoples' traditional and financial interests are considered. Following the latest nature conservation trends (CBD, n.d.b) to achieve sustainable use of NTFPs, PAs' management and donors should broaden the focus to include both people and biodiversity. In this way, PA managers will have partners for nature conservation. This can be achieved by using a

participatory approach that will ensure local ownership, so that results from nature conservation projects will remain after donor support ends.

- **People (PAs' MAs and local people) are the main factor for sustainable use of NTFPs, and any future project(s) should facilitate a process of change** in their understanding, attitude, financial interests and practices. As change does not happen quickly, donor support over a number of years is necessary, (as reflected in lessons learned from the SIDA-funded Forest for Local Economic Development (FLED) project (CNVP, 2014; 2018) and the Swiss donor support for the protection of the Prespa Basin, via UNDP).
- **To successfully address NTFP issues, interventions are needed to strengthen the whole value chain.** In order to help local people to either organise (North Macedonia) or continue supporting the functioning of an existing structure (Albania), MAP plantations should be supported to decrease pressure on nature, build local capacity, and support market opportunities, as well as facilitate networking and the exchange of experiences and good practices.
- The transformation of the sector to achieve the sustainable use of NTFPs should use a **cross border/regional approach**, because the NTFP market is informally organized at cross border level. Albania provides the majority of collectors for both countries, and has organized NTFP cultivated plantations. North Macedonia offers market access for people in Albania of the WPA, and provides use for the NTFPs that are collected by formal and informal business initiatives. The major aspect for cross border activities is the lack of institutional control where collectors from Albania sell NTFPs into North Macedonia. All of these activities are undocumented, but are noted by people in the sector. Therefore, any solution to the issue of sustainable NTFP must take into account the financial interests on both sides of the border.
- Past projects have failed, primarily because of changes in management structures and staffing (see Annex I). Continuation of projects could be achieved through **partnerships between CSOs and MAs.** Though such examples do not exist in the NTFP field, CSOs do work with tourism promotion e.g. Prespa Bike that promotes mountain biking in North Macedonia has had a long term partnership with Resen Municipality that continues despite recent changes of the Mayor and the Municipal Government.
- **Continuity in building local capacities, knowledge and skills in the WPA is crucial for development in the sector.** There is a low capacity of local people and a low number of CSOs inside the WPA in North Macedonia and Albania that can address successfully all aspects of the NTFP sector. A capacity development programme is required covering the sustainable use of local resources, entrepreneurship skills, product development, marketing, branding, promotion, and proposal/business plan development to apply for EU IPA funding.
- The WPA lacks leaders to convert the current simple harvesting of NTFPs into a financially successful business that processes NTFPs and ensures the sustainable use of NTFPs. The inspiration and motivation for the sustainable use of NTFPs should be sought by supporting actions such as **piloting that can demonstrate positive examples** in generating income for local people. It may take more than 4 years to achieve such a goal (Mousios and Martelli, 2019).
- Support to entrepreneurship initiatives in the NTFP sector is needed, with a priority to engage and empower **young people and women**. A positive example can be seen with the women's group in Gollomboc village, Albania, (which was established through the FLED project (CNVP, 2014; 2018), which was helped to plant mountain tea and sell it to wholesalers, thereby increasing the women's incomes. A similar example exists in North Macedonia where the rural women of Prespa have been organized informally to provide home-made catering.

Specific recommendations require developing programmes, rather than projects, to help build the capacities of local stakeholders. Proposed interventions have been organised below in six groups related to the general public, harvesters, plantations, processing, marketing and institutions. Necessary interventions are listed in sequential order within each group, although some interventions can be done in parallel. Each group of interventions can be treated as a programme for developing that particular area, but bearing in mind that all groups need to be addressed to have real effect in achieving sustainable development and improving people's' livelihoods.

- **General public related interventions needed**
    1. **Knowledge and awareness** about NTFPs and in particular their sustainable use is missing among local people. It should be enabled through working with young people in schools. Topics such as knowledge on NTFP species, sustainable harvesting of NTFPs, and entrepreneurship of NTFPs should be covered in schools. Implementation is possible in both formal and informal education. Local teachers and professors could practice such activities if they are provided with materials for classes. Programme development, including curriculum and teaching materials, could be developed together with CSOs. These could support working with young people, as well as with rural people to help develop new/existing NTFP businesses.

- **Harvesters' related interventions needed**
    1. **Support to the creation of harvesters' association structures**. Organized harvesters are needed for secure collectors' rights. In North Macedonia, there is a need to establish a producer group following the example from Albania where an informal producer group Fejza from Pustec was established (CNVP, 2018). This process is regarded as both difficult and even unlikely, but it is understandable since it will take effort to change the current opinion and behaviour of harvesters who need to understand the benefits of associating.
    2. In order to provide support and training to the harvesters in North Macedonia, an **accessible registry of harvesters** is needed. There are two options: one is to have it managed by the municipalities that can be linked to support, so that harvesters would have interested to be involved; and the second would be within an organized structure of NTFP harvesters. This activity is linked with municipal and/or state aid, as well as other support realisation that will be key in attracting more harvesters to register.
    3. **Support to creation of legal entities from harvesters' associating structures**. In both Albania and North Macedonia, harvesters should be helped to form a legal entity. As an example, beekeepers from North Macedonia are organized in an association, e.g. FA "Nektar", Bitola or from outside of the WPA, the National Association of Private Forest Owners of North Macedonia. This activity requires the identification of a dedicated person(s) who will work for the association, and therefore his/her capacity will need to be developed.
    4. **Needed capacity building for harvesters.** Since harvesting from nature does not require investment, local people are more favourable to harvest from the wild. To ensure that sustainable harvesting practices are applied, people need to regularly upgrade their knowledge and training, including information on, and identification of, protected species that are not to be collected. Furthermore, in regard to harvesting from plantations, new knowledge is required on: increasing productivity; post-harvest handling; and interventions to ensure quality and reduce waste. Such

trainings have been implemented in the WPA, although there is a continuous need for capacity building. The trainings could be linked to new sustainable technologies or tools that participants would receive if they pass the training, an activity deemed as successful in the project for the Restoration of the Prespa Lake Ecosystem (UNDP, 2012), where farmers who were successful on the training for sustainable practices were given a donation of equipment to implement such practices. Preferably, these trainings would be delivered by an established harvesters' association.

5. Leveraging the position of the harvesters can be achieved by providing them with **storage and post-harvest processing facilities**. However, these facilities can be provided for an existing association of harvesters, as capacity is needed to manage such a facility. This identified need can be the trigger to have the harvesters organized in an association (in any form of a formal organization, whether a CSO, a cooperative, or a cluster) to maintain and manage the facility and receive higher purchase prices. While the association would require and maintain a sustainable standard for its members, such a 'carrot' system has been applied with success in the project for the Restoration of the Prespa Lake Ecosystem (UNDP, 2012). This activity would be paired with development of capacity for post-harvest processing.
6. **Organisation of buyout.** There is a need to involve NTFP companies and harvesters to negotiate administrative rules and their implementation to benefit all parties. NTFP companies are willing to invest in the implementation of existing rules and eliminate illegal speculators, but have no jurisdiction, while harvesters would like higher prices and thus prefer the existence of illegal speculators. In this regard, actions that promote cooperation between NTFP companies, collectors and PA MAs are strongly recommended.

- **Plantation related interventions needed**
    1. **Involvement of women in NTFP cropping**. Examples from Albania include the formation of non-formal producer groups and nut clubs where the majority of members are women (CNVP, 2014). These activities can be further supported/extended, and capacities developed. In North Macedonia, a producer group should be established, or added to the existing non-formal group of rural women apple-growers. The latter would provide more opportunities for apple growers to combine sustainable measures like permaculture in apple orchards and production of MAPs, while still having apples as crown level production or switching from apple production to MAP production.
    2. **Capacity building in how to approach subsidy funds** that can be used for NTFP cropping. Training could be implemented by CSOs that work in this field, such as a national federation of farmers, but an added value would be if such an activity is implemented by a local association or a cluster organization.
    3. As plants harvested from the wild do not meet current market demand, there is a need for cultivation of MAPs. **Engagement in cultivation of aromatic and medicinal plants is a good strategy for taking the pressure off nature**. Learning from existing practices in PNP, NPs in North Macedonia can consider this approach and involve local people in field work.
    4. **Training on cropping and managing plantations** of NTFP related species, paired with initial support in seeds, machinery, consultancy on sustainable methods, and getting subsidies, would stimulate local people to start this type of farming. Further support can link these farmers with the existing processing businesses of NTFPs. The activity could be implemented by CSOs that work in this field, such as a national federation

of farmers, but an added value would be if such an activity is implemented by a local association or a cluster organization.

5. **Access to information and studies on which NTFPs can be cultivated**. As an example, the natural distribution of the Gentian plant is threatened by human and climate change factors. A study in Albania (Nelaj, et al., 2018) showed that the Gentian plant can be a species under cultivation with agricultural importance and with high pharmaceutical value. It is possible that the agricultural and productive qualities of this plant can be used to improve the livelihoods of farmers. Cropping materials exist for "Galicica" NP (GFA, 2009) as well. A local CSO, or preferably a local association or cluster, would gain access to this research via the internet and workshops to disseminate the information.

- **Processing related interventions needed**
    1. **Training on simple steps to add value** within the capacity (ability and resources) of NTFP harvesters can be delivered with topics covering sustainable post harvesting, processing and packaging. A successful example implemented in Albania (CNVP, 2018) can be implemented in North Macedonia, and could be further developed in Albania. CSOs or associations could implement these activities.
    2. **Training on sustainable packaging** for trade that supports quality, consistency and longevity can also be delivered. There is a successful example implemented in Albania (CNVP, 2018) that can be implemented in North Macedonia, and could be extended and further developed in Albania. CSOs or associations could implement these activities.
    3. **Trainings on entrepreneurship and innovative product development** can be useful for disrupting existing, conservative thinking. Paired with support for direct marketing and/or business-oriented production, this could boost the sector to achieve greater income from NTFP activities. CSOs or associations could implement this.
    4. Support is required for **non-formal businesses to become a legal entity** and/or create a company or an appropriate legal form of organization with embedded sustainable standards. CSOs or associations could implement these activities by providing support through business consultancy, business plan development, assistance for receiving state funds, and even matching state funds to provide for implementation of sustainable standards.
    5. Support should be given to NTFP related SMEs e.g. Rosa Kanina and Spirit of Prespa from North Macedonia, etc. to help them **meet sustainability standards** and become flagships of sustainable change in the region. The support could focus on sustainable production technologies and sustainable harvesting protocols.
    6. **Educational "seeing is believing" visits** should be organised for showing examples of successful SMEs that engage with processing NTFPs into final products e.g. in North Macedonia, visiting Rosa Kanina that makes products from MAPs. Other examples can be taken from (say) Greece and Bulgaria.

- **Marketing related interventions needed**
    1. **Raising market awareness** is required among harvesters and producers concerning their understanding of end-consumer and buyer demands and expectations. A successful example implemented in Albania (CNVP, 2018) can be implemented in North Macedonia, and developed further in Albania. CSOs or associations could implement these activities in the form of capacity building for local people.

2. **NTFP cluster formation** would enable access to larger markets. The tourism cluster of the South-West region of North Macedonia is a good example of how the tourism sector in Ohrid region started to plan 'production' and organize themselves for 'buyers'. This would require the strong involvement of young people's **capacity building** so they can take over the work after any project/donor funded intervention ends. (A FAO project on Business Oriented Agriculture abruptly ended in Prespa once the project stopped, even though business relations with the producers were established.) CSOs or associations could implement these activities, paired with capacity building for local people.
3. **Branding, marketing and promotion** of selected NTFPs from the WPA is a recurring need built on farmers who have direct marketing experience and have organized associations, like beekeepers and NTFP packing and processing businesses. A marketing project is required with PA support, and preferably regionally. One option is to aim for a PGI label for the whole WPA (Mousios and Martelli, 2019). CSOs or associations could implement these activities, paired with capacity building for local people.
4. **Direct marketing** of NTFP products increases income per volume sold e.g. in North Macedonia, Spirit of Prespa makes candles from beeswax using local products and selling them online. Projects on direct marketing should be implemented where it would include training on marketing and opening new markets, and support to develop an on-line presence. Involving formal and informal producers could increase employment and income generation. CSOs or associations could implement these activities, paired with capacity building of local people.
5. **Organization of NTFP promotion events and fairs** from WPA are required in the style of the Prespa Apple Picking Festival in Resen or the Days of Honey in Bitola, in order to increase the visibility of local NTFP producers and link them with direct buyers. The PAs could take on this initiative in partnership with local CSOs, so that local people are encouraged to feel that the PAs are there to help them and not prevent their income generation. This line of communication would secure better cooperation between the users and protectors of NTFP species.
6. **Linking producers with traders and buyers of NTFPs** should be encouraged by organising buyer-seller meetings with the aim of developing good business deals for both parties. Such meetings will help to increase mutual understanding among producers and buyers. A successful example implemented in Albania (CNVP, 2018) can be implemented in North Macedonia and developed further in Albania. CSOs or associations could implement these activities, but preference should be given to a local association or cluster.
7. **Business oriented marketing** of NTFPs needs to be established e.g. the Prespa Marketing Organization from Albania that links producer groups with traders (CNVP, 2018) to increase volume sales. Building the capacities of this organization and creating one in North Macedonia would support earlier efforts to associate stakeholders. Such capacity building could be delivered by a legally established local association, cooperation or cluster.

- **Institution related interventions needed**
    1. **Training is required to strengthen the capacities of staff in institutions** that deal with NTFPs, such as the Police, inspectorate, guard services, etc., on the sustainable use of NTFPs, with an accent on biodiversity conservation and community rights.

These trainings could be done by environmental/forestry CSOs that have solid knowledge of the issues involved.

2. Support is needed to **link better the PA management objectives with the sustainable use of NTFPs**, in terms of mapping (zoning), identification of their quantities, monitoring of NTFP harvesting, and plantation production of MAPs. Some management gaps could be filled by the involvement of local people, especially in monitoring and plantation production. Both PA managers and local people can benefit from "**participatory monitoring" and "cultivation/cropping"**. It can lead to an improved understanding by local people of sustainable harvesting. At the same time, the PA authorities can fill and correct gaps in Management Plans and decrease the pressure on nature. Local CSOs could take the lead in this process under the guidance of the NPs, and Resen Municipality with their NPE.
3. **NTFP collection from private ownership or land in communal use has to be taken into account** when preparing management protocols. Advocacy on this matter could be achieved by a CSO or an association, and paired with the work of the National Association of Private Forest Owners.
4. **Advocacy on national policies.** An applicable national policy is required that will address the needs of rural people related to the NTFP sector. In this regard, clarification is required concerning ownership, areas cultivated either privately or on municipal land, and the rights over NTFPs of the Forest Department and National Parks. CSOs or associations could implement these activities.

ANNEX 1 - Overview of Initiatives And Programs in The WPA

- DAYS OF MACEDONIAN BEEKEEPING (North Macedonia) is organized as a fair in Bitola by the Beekeeper's association "Nektar" from Bitola. It is an annual event that began in 1998, still ongoing, to promote the beekeeping and the use of honey, but as a tool for direct marketing.
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF MAPS PRESPA-OHRID, Oct-99 (Albania) In the region of the Ohrid, Makro and Mikro Prespa lakes the occurrence of medicinal plants should be assessed by field excursions. Their potential to be sustainably used by sustainable collection methods had to be determined. Moreover, the abundance of the plant species, the vulnerability and endangerments including potential threats should be assessed. The requirements of the Washington Convention and the protection status by international or national legislation had to be analysed. The project produced an Assessment of the Sustainable use of Medicinal Plants from the Ohrid and Prespa Region (Fremuth, 1999).
- PELISTER MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION PROJECT (North Macedonia) started in 2001 and supported the first novel approach to NP management in North Macedonia (Notarianni, 2008). The project was implemented by Pro Natura from Switzerland, and financed by the Swiss Agency for Development (SDC). Within this project mapping for Rose Hip and Bilberry was made and harvesting quantities were determined; permits were supposed to be issued. The project as a whole failed, though it had a good first phase. But due to the change of the management in the NP "Pelister" in 2007, the new management decided to abandon the implementation of the developed Management Plan, and this lead to breach of contract and stopping any further financial support. The donors see a concern that there is no consciousness among high government officials to protect nature and to implement the management plans in national park. The management of the NP is a political party decision, and not related with the implementation of the management plan.
    - NTFP HARVESTERS REGISTRY - Implemented by NP "Pelister" with financial support of the SDC. These activities continued beyond the project, together with the issuing of the permits.
    - NTFP HARVESTERS EDUCATION - Implemented by NP "Pelister" with financial support of SDC. Continuation is seen in the form of manual on the harvesting licence itself that is issue by Pelister NP.
- PRELIMINARY ACTIONS FOR LABELLING OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AS PRESPA PARK PRODUCTS, 2005 to June 2009 (Albania and North Macedonia) Both in Greece and the rest of Europe, the countryside and the natural environment face an increasing pressure due to the intensification of agriculture, the irrational use of agrochemicals, the depletion of natural resources and other factors. At the same time, an important part of the total population works and lives in these areas, while agriculture is significantly influenced by the new market trends and the European Union policies. The "One Europe, More Nature" project focused on areas of high natural value aiming at combining nature protection and the sustainable use of natural resources with local development and improvement of the inhabitants' standard of living. NTFP are part of proposed products.
- DAY OF SUB PELISTER PRODUCTS (North Macedonia) was a fair of local produce, organized from Bitola Municipality that was planned to be an annual event to promote the local agricultural/rural products and tourism, however it was functional only from 2007 to 2010. After 2010, the donor funds ran out and the Municipality did not dedicate funds for the event organization.
- BRANDING OF THE MOUNTAIN TEA SIDERITIS RAESERI (Albania and North Macedonia) was supported by GIZ in 2007/8. There were several activities done within this project:

- In the process, National Park “Galičica” received ownership of a Trade Mark and Geographical Origin for the mountain tea. However, due to change of management in the National Park “Galičica” the process stopped and no effect of the benefit of the branding was realised.
- Training of Harvesters in National park “Galičica”.

- SUPPORT TO GALIČICA NATIONAL PARK (North Macedonia) a project in the frame of the "Transboundary Biosphere Reserve ", implemented by GFA, and supported by KFW in the period 2008 - 2010. Within this project a report for prepared on Development of Organic Agriculture and Sustainable Use of Other Forest Products in NP “Galicica”. In this report there is an assessment on the potentials for medicinal use of herbs, based on their availability. Elaborates on the need for branding the products from NP “Galicica”. Provides an assessment on the possibilities for cropping of the mountain tea and the rose hip. And gives a tutorial on the uses and methods of collection for 19 selected medicinal herbs. (GFA, 2009)
- NATIONAL PARK “PELISTER” (North Macedonia) Own Initiatives:
  - NTFP UNDER CONCESSION - There was an initiative at NP "Pelister" to make a tenure on the use of bilberry, but it did not realize because the local companies are not interested for this kind of approach.
  - ORGANIC CERTIFICATION - Implemented by NP "Pelister" in the scope of the park, three years in a row, from 2010-2012, but with no success since the NTFP buyers saw no interest to pay a premium price, or the added value of it - the only interest is cheaper buying prices, therefore the certificate was not renewed.
- PREPARATION OF A PROPOSAL FOR AN AREA BASED DEVELOPMENT IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (Albania and North Macedonia) implemented by Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe and financed by the EU, in the period 2011 – 2012. Within the scope of this project a Baseline Study and Strategic Plan for Development of Prespa Region was produced. This study asses the current socio-economic situation, disparities and potentials for development within the Region, while the Strategic and the Action Plan present the Strategic Framework of jointly defined and agreed solutions by the Regional Stakeholders through applying the Area Based Development approach. The report only addresses the beekeeping business from NTFP (Naumoski, 2012).
- LANDSCAPE SCALE CONSERVATION IN THE PRESPA LAKE BASIN – TRANSBOUNDARY SPECIES AND HABITAT CONSERVATION ACTION PLANS (Albania and North Macedonia) A project supported by UNDP/GEF realised a number of Conservation plans, amongst: Conservation Action Plan for Mountain tea in the Prespa Lakes Watershed (Schwaderer and Walters, 2012). This conservation action plan (CAP) has been prepared with the aim of ensuring the long-term favourable conservation status, sustainable management, restoration and protection of the populations of mountain tea in the Prespa watershed, including across trans-national boundaries. The actions proposed are mainly directed towards harmonization and enforcement of legislation, establishing a licensing system, implementation of management plans for national parks (NP) in the Prespa Region, establishing sustainable commercial and ad hoc collection, development of fair and modern marketing that could provide an additional income for local people and revitalisation of the most affected sites for the mountain tea populations (‘hot spots’) aiming to eliminate overharvesting and improper collection of mountain tea.
- FOREST FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Project (Albania) implemented by CNVP in Albania, with support of Swedish Embassy (2014 - 2018). This project promoted improved decentralised decision making, planning and implementation for communal forests and pastures in support of more inclusive economic development. The project contributed to extend the registration of forest and pastures as properties of communes and in particular

participatory mapping according to traditional users at village level, which is considered as crucial for economic development and sustainability of the transfer process. Within this framework of secured land tenure the project supported sustainable communal and forest management practices, the support to specific communal forests product value chains and related income generation, especially for women and address required supportive policy and legal environment and required capacities of the different actors involved. It supported the organization of producers groups, capacities and roles of the Federations at national and regional level regarding their functioning, representations and service delivery as well as the functioning of the Forest and Pasture Users Associations at local level. Gender, it was a cross cutting component throughout the project. (CNVP, 2018)

Within this project Prespa Marketing Organization was established as a CSO in June 2014, and supported by CNVP. They started with a preliminary market analysis. Farmers pay around 100 Euro per year to become a member of the organisation in order to financially sustain the organisation. In the area of Prespa National Park four producer groups are active. Each of these groups focuses on a particular product: the production and marketing of honey, collection and marketing of medicinal plants, mountain tea, the collection and sell of mushroom, however, all these groups faced some marketing challenges.

CNVP in collaboration with Prespa national park organised a number of meetings with producers' group's representatives on different models to improve the marketing and sustainable management of the products. The main purposes of this organisations are: 1) market identification, 2) intermediary role between producers and traders, and 3) negotiation on producers' behalf. The marketing organisation plays thus a facilitating role, while the producers sell the produce by themselves.

The marketing organisation already made remarkable achievements in its first 2 years of operation. Through negotiation with traders, the selling price of the mountain tea increased by 30% compared to the previous year (2015). Efforts were made to enhance the marketing of honey through increasing the quality of honey products and, improve the packaging and labelling (with support from different projects/ organisations). Furthermore, staff of the marketing organization are negotiating with Albanian traders to buy their mushrooms. At present the mushroom collectors have to cross a mountain range to sell their mushrooms in North Macedonia and starting from 2018, in Albania too.

Currently the Prespa Marketing Organisation is facing multiple problems in its functioning. Some of these problems are identified as: lack of capacities, lack of human resources, young people are leaving the area for big cities, lack of trust among farmers and between farmers and big collectors, lack of understanding and trust for the possibilities and potentials in establishment of cooperatives.

- IMPROVING MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS (North Macedonia) The project is implemented by UNDP and supported by EU. The duration period is from 2014 till end of 2020. The aim is to improve nature protection and to promote sustainable use of natural resources while increasing the capacity of designated authorities and NGOs to manage protected areas professionally (UNDP, 2019). Activities of this project are being implemented in "Pelister" NP and NPE. There are three sub projects related:
    - **Strengthening the National Park "Pelister"** Administration that is done with NP "Pelister" aiming to build capacities for monitoring of the species, including NTFP species.
    - **Sustainable Future Of Prespa Lake Monument Of Nature And Nature Park "Ezerani"** that is done with Resen Municipality as manager of NPE, and aims to build the capacities for monitoring of the species, and to rise the public awareness with the

aim to rise the protection level. As a result there will be developed a Program for Development of the Nature Park “Ezerani”.

- **Sustainable Management of Plant Natural Resources in the Prespa Region** is done with Balkan Foundation for Sustainable Development. The project aims to improve protection, conservation, monitoring and sustainable use of commercial species of flora in the Prespa region (NP “Pelister”) and will produce digital maps of 15 flora species together with their productivity. Among these plants is a study of the blueberry that is considered to be of the biggest economic value in the Park.
- **Improvement of the Management Effectiveness in “Galičica” National Park** is done with NP ““Galičica” and the aim is to improve the Management Effectiveness trough Promotion, Biodiversity Conservation and Monitoring In the scope of this project the plan is to reintroduce deer in the park.

- SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY ON MAPs (Albania) December 2015, this is a Social and economic influence in collection and marketing of NTFP in South Albania, however this study does not provide detailed information on NTFP in the Prespa region.
- MOUNTAINS AND MEMORIES (North Macedonia) was a youth exchange project that dealt with YOUTH EDUCATION on nature awareness and healthier lifestyle (Sfera, 2017). It was implemented by the CSO SFERA in 2017 as an international youth exchange supported by ERASMUS+ programme. The project is valued as very successful for the things that the 25 young people learned about nature and the traditional uses of NTFP, like making a bilberry jam.
- PREPARATION OF STUDY FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES IN THE WIDER PRESPA/PRESPES LAKES AREA project (Mousios and Martelli, 2019) is implemented by Equinoccio and Ramboll, and supported by the European Union. In the framework of this project a Draft Study for Sustainable Development for the Wider Prespa/Prespes Lakes Area is prepared in 2019. In the study foresees that it will take more than 4 years to stimulate people to change practices with the help of extensive pilot projects in the region. Recognizes the need for environmental labelling of “Prespa Park Product” name under a Protected Geographical Indication” (PGI) label. Support for direct market access through shops at tourist important sites.

ANNEX 2 - Overview of NTFP Related Policies

The basis for addressing sustainable development policies for NTFP in the Wider Prespa Area as joint cross border area

- DECLARATION ON THE CREATION OF THE PRESPA PARK AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESPA LAKES AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS (2000), represents the beginning and the foundation that lead to the cross border protection of the WPA that requires development of sustainable tourism.
- Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011) was signed by the Environment Ministers of the three countries and the EU in 2010. The document provides legally binding obligation for a cross border holistic approach to the economic development of the Wider Prespa Area, and in particular protect and conserve the biodiversity of the Area by protecting especially the endemic, rare, threatened or endangered species of flora (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011, p.3).

International policies that have further effect on NTFP

- CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY ratified by the Parliament of North Macedonia in 2005 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2005).
- CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS. Council of Europe, Bern, 19 September 1979, entered into force in Republic of North Macedonia in 1997 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1997a).
- CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY. UNEP, Rio, 5 June 1992, ratified by Republic of North Macedonia in 1997 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1997b).
- CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA, ratified by the Republic of North Macedonia in 1999 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1999).

National policies and instruments in North Macedonia

- NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR NATURE PROTECTION 2017 - 2027 Foresees protection of rare and endangered plant species and creation of a red list, as well as methods of monitoring for important habitats (Markoski, 2016).
- NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY WITH ACTION PLAN 2018 - 2023. Recognizes that there are no appropriate data on the collection of NTFP (p.73), and sees the need to: assess the quantities; to clarify jurisdictions over NTFP; to revise the list of concerned wild species and the list of NTFP; to define quotas for collection; to have specified customs marks for the species and their parts; to specify the exporting fees for NTFP; and to secure feedback from the Customs and companies on the exported quotas. (p.76) It plans to designate quotas for collection of NTFP, designate areas where collection would be allowed, and to arrange the system for licensing the NTFP collectors. Within the aims of the Strategy it foresees: 1. Awareness rising on the protection of species; 2. Incorporation of biodiversity in the policies for economic development; 3. To provide positive stimulations for protection and sustainable use of biodiversity; 4. Establishment of practices that preserve biodiversity and maintain ecosystem services; 5. Elaboration of plans for sustainable use that maintain the resource within safe environmental limits; 6. To define the situation with the NTFP species in order to prevent their loss; 7. To setup monitoring of biodiversity and natural processes; 8. To provide protection of species through joint, cross border activities; and 9.

To maintain and promote traditional meaning, innovations and practices for protection and sustainable use of the biological diversity, that also implies to NTFP. (MOEPP, 2015)

- STRATEGY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF FORESTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA 2006 - 2026 One of the goals of this strategy is to: "Encourage the utilization of non-wood forest products through integrated forest management based on sustainable sylviculture, ecological and socio-economic approach, ensuring conditions for sustainable exploitation and additional incomes to the local population" (MAFWE, 2006). And plans to make a study on availability and capacity of NTFP; elaborated proper regulation of the use of NTFP; valorisation of the forests including NTFP; promote sustainable NTFP use and promote SMEs based on NTFP (MAFWE, 2006).
- SPATIAL PLAN OF REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA provides the spatial plan on where certain activities are allowed or not in particular in the protected nature zones (Spatial Plan of Republic of North Macedonia, 2004). In example: it foresees decrease of the surface of abandoned arable land by 70% and decrease of the surface of low growth forests by 2020.
- LAW ON NATURE PROTECTION (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2004). The main focus is on the protection of the threatened and protected species of plants and animals and provides legal basis for a Rulebook and a list of threatened species. It uses the term Wild Species for NTFP as defined "Wild species shall mean species or sub-species of plant, fungi or animal which was not generated under human influence as a results of breeding". It regulates the procedures and methods for collection of wild species. It prohibits the collection of highly protected species. Gives the right to provide licenses to Administration for Environment of the MOEPP.
- RULEBOOK FOR ISSUING PERMITS FOR COLLECTION OF THREATENED AND PROTECTED WILD SPECIES OF PLANTS, FUNGI, ANIMALS AND THEIR PLANTS (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2009b) regulates that during collection of threatened species 80% of the bulbs, 70% of the leaves, 30% of flowers, and seeds and 20% fruits must be kept.
- LIST OF THREATENED AND PROTECTED SPECIES OF PLANTS, ANIMALS AND THEIR PARTS (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2011) provides the list of threatened species that should have special treatment.
- LAW ON PROCLAMATION OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SITE "EZERANI" ON THE PRESPA LAKE FOR STRICT NATURE RESERVE (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1996). Defines the area where the protected area is.
- LAW ON FORESTS (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2009a) defines the local term for NTFP as "other forest products" and provides legal basis for a rulebook. It differentiates two types of collection: for personal use of up to 1kg, and commercial use. Commercial collection is required to be done with a license for collecting. Regulates the need for a management plan. Forbids collection of strictly protected species. And specifies that the use or collection of NTFP is performed in a way that will not lead to the extermination of individual plant species and thereby not cause any damage to forests. Gives the right to provide licenses to PENF.
- RULEBOOK OF NON-WOOD FOREST PRODUCTS from 2011 defines the term as: "species of forest products may include products of biological and mineral origin in the forest and forest grounds, such as moss and lichen, ferns, medicinal and aromatic plants, other plants and their parts (roots, bark, leaves, fruit, etc..), mushrooms, resins, game etc. as well as manner of utilization and collecting other forest products." Regulates the collection of forest products to be done in a way that would not violate the natural populations of the species and thus maintain their biodiversity, productivity, capacity for regeneration and their potential to fulfil now and in future environmental, economic and social functions, in accordance with forest management plans. Further specifies that in the collection of other

forest products is required to be kept 50% of the bulbs and leaves, 30% of flowers, fruits and seeds and 20% of plants for future regeneration. And that during the collection of NWFPs other vegetation, trees and ground should not be damaged.

- RULEBOOK FOR ISSUING OF PERMITS FOR HARVESTING, CONTRACTS FOR RELAYING THE BUYOUT AND FOR MAKING REGISTRY ABOUT NTFP. The last version in force since 2013, the rulebook regulates the issuing of permits and the procedure for obtaining contracts for making NTFP buyout from the harvesters, as well as maintaining a record on all data.
- LAW ON FORESTRY AND HUNTING INSPECTORATE
- SPATIAL PLAN FOR NATIONAL PARK "PELISTER" Regulating the protected zones of the park and the activities within those zones in respect to the Law on nature protection.
- SPATIAL PLAN FOR NATIONAL PARK "GALICICA" Regulating the protected zones of the park and the activities within those zones in respect to the Law on nature protection.
- LAW ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE OHRID REGION from 2010 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2010). The law affects the WPA that is under the Ohrid Municipality. It regulates the formation of a Commission and a Management Plan for the World Heritage Site in the Ohrid Region and aims, among other, to prevent negative influences to the natural and cultural values of the Ohrid Region.
- NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA for the period 2014-2020, only tackles few issues related to sustainable use of NTFP, and in particular the plantations of wild aromatic, medicinal and spice plants. It recognizes the underutilization of the potential of herbs being produced in plantations (Government of Republic of North Macedonia, 2014, p.30). It foresees measures for future financing from IPA (Government of Republic of North Macedonia, 2014, p.222). As well as it proposes use of solar energy for the drying and processing of the herbs (Government of Republic of North Macedonia, 2014, p.228).
- NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA 2009 - 2030
- INSTRUMENT FOR PRE ACCESSION in part financed by the EU has a Rural Development programme where from people and businesses engaged with NTFP can ask for financial support for their plans.
- SELF-EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT - The Agency for Employment together with the Ministry of Labour and Social Matters and UNDP since 2007, are implementing a scheme where any individual that wants to start a business can ask for a one time support of up to 5000 EUR per individual that he/she can use them for equipment or materials purchase. The scheme has been seen as successful due to the great interest. (AERM, 2019) This scheme can be used by people that want to start a business with NTFP.
- Measure for RISING OF NEW MULTIYEAR VINE AND FRUIT PLANTATIONS, AND MULTIYEAR PLANTATIONS OF AROMATIC HERBS AND HONEY YIELDING PLANTS ON NEW AREAS, that is annually implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of North Macedonia and provides subsidies of up to 50% of the costs (nn, 2018).

Local and regional policies and instruments in North Macedonia

- STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RESEN MUNICIPALITY for the period 2016-2021, recognizes the potential of the NTFP as a viable income for the local people, and especially the sustainable use of NTFP as a way for protecting nature and biodiversity. It further suggests that plantations of mountain tea and other herbs should be promoted. However it also concludes that beekeeping is very low in the municipality, though assessments say that

production should be good and favourable in the municipality. (Resen Municipality Council, 2016)

- LOCAL ACTION PLAN FOR BITOLA MUNICIPALITY
- LOCAL ACTION PLAN FOR OHRID MUNICIPALITY
- LOCAL ACTION PLAN FOR RESEN MUNICIPALITY
- MANAGEMENT PLAN OF NATIONAL PARK "GALICICA"
  Regulates that collecting of tea and mushrooms is permitted only in the zone of sustainable use.
- MANAGEMENT PLAN OF NATIONAL PARK "PELISTER" (2006 - 2015) In Table 2.3.2. Description of the activities in the zones, collection of mushrooms, fruits and MAPs is allowed in all zones, with a prior permission and in accordance with the recommendations of the MP, except in the buffer zones is forbidden. While have list with species forbidden for collection in all zones. Page 53.
- MANAGEMENT PLAN OF NATURE PARK "EZERANI" (Resen Municipality, 2012) provides a full description of the NPE on the current situation, valorisation of the PA and an Action Plan. It includes the topic of the economic activities of the local people where NTFP are mentioned, and foresees a study for the use of NTFP.
- FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR NATIONAL PARK "GALICICA" has a section Form IV where the Plan for sustainable utilization of other forest products is contained and provides information on the state of NTFP and quantities. However these data are not evaluated and assessment of the situation with the NTFP species is not done, but merely rewritten from the previous plan.
- FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR NATIONAL PARK "PELISTER" has a section Form IV where the Plan for sustainable utilization of other forest products is contained and provides information on the state of NTFP and quantities. However these data are not evaluated and assessment of the situation with the NTFP species is not done, but merely rewritten from the previous plan.
- FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR FORESTRY UNIT PRESPADRVO has a section Form IV where the Plan for sustainable utilization of other forest products is contained and provides information on the state of NTFP and quantities. However these data are not evaluated and assessment of the situation with the NTFP species is not done, but merely rewritten from the previous plan.
- ACTION PLAN FOR PROTECTION OF THE FORESTS OF JUNIPERUS EXCELSA IN THE PRESPA CATCHMENT AREA
- CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN FOR MOUNTAIN TEA IN THE PRESPA LAKES WATERSHED (Schwaderer and Walters, 2012). This conservation action plan (CAP) has been prepared with the aim of ensuring the long-term favourable conservation status, sustainable management, restoration and protection of the populations of mountain tea in the Prespa watershed, including across trans-national boundaries. The actions proposed are mainly directed towards harmonization and enforcement of legislation, establishing a licensing system, implementation of management plans for NPs in the Prespa Region, establishing sustainable commercial and ad hoc collection, development of fair and modern marketing that could provide an additional income for local people and revitalisation of the most affected sites for the mountain tea populations ('hot spots') aiming to eliminate overharvesting and improper collection of mountain tea.
- In Nature Park "Ezerani" is in process of development of a RULEBOOK FOR HARVESTING NTFP.

National policies and instruments in Albania

Albania approved a 10-year moratorium from January 2016 that will ban logging in all forests and the export of timber. The law allows only municipality representatives to cut down trees to meet the needs of people who burn wood for winter fuel including protecting areas based on a Memorandum of Understanding between Municipality and National Park, in the economic development areas.

- in 2014, the **State Inspectorate of Environment and Forestry** was established as a separate public institution subordinated to the then Ministry of Environment, which it is considered a progress in reforming the environmental enforcement system, by UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
- In the Management Plan of Prespa National Park, the MAPs are mentioned in the Chapter 3, in the table of measures need to be taken for under zoning for sustainable development.
- The 2015 **National Programme for Environmental Education in High Schools** for the period 2015–2017 is a good step to reach target 4.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aimed at ensuring that all learners acquire, by 2030, the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. However, no financial and human resources are dedicated to the implementation of this policy document. In many cases, environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD) are still being carried out by international agencies and donors.
- The 2016 **National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan** envisages the expansion of the system of protected areas by increasing the combined surface of protected areas to 17 percent of the total surface, giving directions on their management and control
- The institutional framework for the development and management of protected areas has improved with the creation of the National Agency of Protected Areas in 2015. Furthermore, the **Law on Protected Areas**, adopted in 2017, paves the way for using the revenues generated by protected areas for their development, field work, communication and awareness, afforestation and fire prevention.
- Albania progressed with the establishment of the legal and **institutional framework for monitoring and reporting on biodiversity and forestry**. However, implementation still lags behind, due to a lack of funds and overlap of monitoring responsibilities, impeding the analysis of trends.
- **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, target 15.2 is related to sustainable forest management.
- **LAW No.10 120**, dated 23.4.2009: **For the Protection of the Fund of Medical Plants** foreseen the ownership, technical conditions and rules, roles and responsibilities of their management. The existing Law No.10 120 (President of the Republic of Albania, 2009) is forecasting the roles and responsibilities of institutions, but all stakeholders in the sector are lobbying for a new law. Current NTFP law in Albania is under discussions and revisions. During the last year there are organised number of meetings with all stakeholders (Ministry of Environment, National Parks, administrations, NGOs, private sectors, etc), giving opinions on the revised/new law for MAPs. The new law is expected to be approved. The process of developing a new Draft of the Law is ongoing. There are consultation meetings with different stakeholders (CNVP has been part of them) to collect concerns and suggestions.
- **Law No. 9587 on Biodiversity Protection**. This Law aims at preserving and protecting biological diversity by regulating the sustainable use of its elements through the integration of the main elements of biodiversity in the strategies, plans, programmes and all levels of decision-making. The Law is composed of 15 Chapters: (I) General Provisions; (II) Institutions

for biodiversity preservation and protection; (III) Biodiversity planning instruments; (IV) Conservation of ecosystems, habitats and landscapes. (President of the Republic of Albania, 2006)

- The new **Draft law of 2018, on cadastre**, is aiming to regulate the ownership, registration of trees and natural resources: Every tree on public or private land must be registered in the cadastral office of the country where it is located. Their owner must be presented with a map and a detailed inventory of the trees found on his property. For trees in public parks and forests the role of the owner is performed by the state authority according to the relevant legislation (article 64). The registration and ownership issues especially in the National Parks, it is a challenge.
- **Red List of Wild Flora and Fauna**, Albania from 2013, where the protected species of plants and other NTFP are listed (Ministry of Environment of Republic of Albania, 2013).
- **Management Plan of Prespa National Park (2014 - 2024), implemented and monitored by the Staff of Protected Area in Korca.** It is necessary to do a proper planning for MAPs harvesting, which should be monitored by the National Park of Prespa. It is necessary to develop study (including all existing information), selecting medicinal plants of commercial interest and developing a detailed plan: quantities and techniques of harvesting.

ANNEX 3 - Final Workshop

The final consultation workshop to the Assessment of challenges and opportunities for local actions concerning small-scale production, processing and marketing of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) in the Wider Prespa Area in Albania and R. North Macedonia, was held on the 8 April 2019 in the premises of the Monitoring Station in village Stenje, North Macedonia.

On the workshop there were 37 people present from both Albania and North Macedonia, but also guests from Greece. There were stakeholders from the public sector - Resen Municipality and Pustec Municipality, from the three national parks “Galicica”, “Pelister” and “Prespa”, representatives from local CSOs, representatives from the donor community, representatives from farmers, and representatives from the academic sector.

During the workshop the final draft of the report was briefly presented, since the full text had been distributed beforehand with the invitations. Discussions on the various sections of the report were opened and several key points were noted:

On policy, institutions and management of NTFP:

- There should be a clear division on the points between national parks and nature park “Ezerani”, since they are regulated in different laws.
- Points on research and development should be divided, to provide better clarification.
- Honey to be replaced with bee products, since honey is only one of the many bee products.
- The point on the lack of awareness amongst high government officials to be better explained.
- Transparency amongst institutions is a need that is missing.

On harvesting and production of NTFP:

- In North Macedonia has been noted that there are equal participation of both men and women in the NTFP sector, and it should be corrected in the report.
- It should be added that in the training for harvesters attention should be paid on protected species not to be collected.
- There is a need on an accessible registry of harvesters so the municipalities can address development to these people easily.
- Marketing of NTFP is a problem.

On processing and marketing of NTFP:

- There is a need in Albania for a storage and processing facility.

Final workshop participants paying attention to the presentation on the report Stenje, North Macedonia 8 April 2019. Photo: Bojan Rantasa

List of participants

Name	Country	Institution / NGO
Dijana Blazekovikj - Dimovska	North Macedonia	Molika Environmental Movement - Bitola
Vesna Karapetkovska - Hristova	North Macedonia	Molika Environmental Movement - Bitola
Jovan Angeleski	North Macedonia	Molika Environmental Movement - Bitola
Pece Cvetanovski	North Macedonia	Pelister NP
Andon Jani	Albania	Pustec Municipality
Mihallaq Qirjo	Albania	RAPA Korce
Constanze Schaaff	Albania	KFW/GFA Consulting Group
Maja Kotevska	North Macedonia	Resen Municipality
Dejan Dodevski	North Macedonia	Bitola Municipality
Nikola Zdraveski	North Macedonia	UNDP
Ajman Ajmalla	North Macedonia	Resen Municipality
Jone Dimovski	North Macedonia	Resen Municipality
Cveta Trajce	Albania	PPNEA
Zana Trajce	North Macedonia	Prespa marketing
Pando Temelko	North Macedonia	Prespa marketing
Valentina Vurmo	North Macedonia	Prespa marketing

Violeta Prculovska	North Macedonia	Spirit of Prespa
Enver Hoxha	Albania	PFO
Avyie Peconia	Albania	Fermer
Adrian Hoxha	Albania	Kabtixas
Foridon Fhuleku	Albania	Fermer
Milco Duli	North Macedonia	Sfera Macedonia
Mirjam de Koning	Albania	PONT
Janaq Male	Albania	CNVP
Albana Cule	Albania	CNVP
Jovica Voikanovski	North Macedonia	ZRR LAG Prespa
Boshko Stojanovski	North Macedonia	ZRR LAG Prespa
Vasil Jankulla	Albania	SHEP PRESPA
Vasil Male	Albania	Prespa NP
Daniela Zaec	North Macedonia	MES
Julia Henderson	Greece	SPP
Dejan Dimidzievski	North Macedonia	Galicica NP
Silvana Manasievska - Simikj	North Macedonia	FZNH
Angelina Stamatoska	North Macedonia	FZNH
Kristina Buzarovska	North Macedonia	CNVP

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