

MARKET VALUE OF MEDICINAL PLANT WEALTH: A CASE STUDY OF COLLECTION AND MARKETING IN SOUTHERN DISTRICTS OF KERALA

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Medicinal plants play an important role in the health care of the people of Kerala. Both the urban and rural people of Kerala use many medicinal plants either directly as home remedies or indirectly as processed drugs manufactured by traditional Ayurvedic/Siddha pharmaceuticals applying both traditional and modern techniques. Over 80% of the medicinal plants required in the above sectors are collected from forests. Tribals are the traditional plant collectors from the forest. Generally they collect medicinal plants along with other non timber forest produce in specific seasons and sell them to tribal cooperative societies or to middlemen or even to the raw drug dealers. Due to the current revival of interest in

herbal drugs and pharmaceuticals, there has been increasing demand for medicinal plants from the forest leading to over exploitation causing depletion or even extinction of many rare medicinal plant species. The present communication highlights the collection and marketing of 151 important medicinal plants which are most commonly used in traditional system of medicine like Ayurveda, Siddha as well as in other local health traditions. The study also makes an attempt to fix the market value of these species based on the market price and opportunity cost of labour.

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