

Manifesto of Alghero

A commitment to promote the contribution of non-wood forest products to inclusive and green growth and eco-social progress in Europe and worldwide

DRAFT

16 March 2021

We, participants of the Policy Forum “Untapping the potential of non-wood forest products for Europe's green economy”, virtually organised on 16 and 17 March 2021 by the INCREDIBLE Consortium and the European Forest Institute (EFI) in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), have *noted with appreciation* the potential of non-wood forest products (NWFPs) for Europe’s green economy and other regions worldwide;

Noting with appreciation the analyses and recommendations provided by the **White Paper** on “Non-wood forest products for people, nature and the green economy: Policy priorities for Europe” and the inspiring debates during the Policy Forum;

Recognising that the forests of the world, including Europe’s natural, semi-natural and planted forests, are **highly diverse and complex ecosystems**, providing habitats for many species and living systems and adaptive and able to respond in a resilient way to changing natural conditions and human demands;

Acknowledging that forests are a source of a **multitude of goods and services** such as clean air and drinking water as well as healthy, marketable renewable products, both wood and non-wood forest products that provide industries and consumers with a wide range of commodities, from wild foods, such as mushrooms, fruits and nuts, to essential raw materials like cork, natural resins or medicinal plants;

Noting the **richness of the different forest types** in Europe and the world that have evolved under a wide range of climates and were influenced by uses and management decisions of different societies and cultural contexts since more than 40,000 years;

Noting that under the current threats of climate change, **diverse, complex and resilient forests** are needed as living and inhabited social and ecological systems, where NWFPs can provide economic opportunities compatible with sustainably sourced timber and wood for a climate-smart and diversified sustainable circular bioeconomy;

Acknowledging the **cultural legacy of NWFPs** as part of Europe’s cultural heritage used by more than 60 million European foragers, who continue centuries-old traditional uses and knowledge, nurturing spiritual and cultural dimensions and unique culinary traditions;

Acknowledging further the important contribution of NWFPs to **human health and well-being** as an integral part of traditional food systems that are nutritious, adapted to local conditions, potentially tomorrow’s crops and commodities and can contribute to local, regional, and international food value chains, including forest foods that feed the trend for ‘natural food’ and ‘superfoods’ as opportunities of sustaining traditional culture, healthy diets and wellbeing;

Recognising the contribution of NWFPs to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals** and their

- i. **social and cultural** dimensions of SDG1 (No Poverty), SDG2 (Zero Hunger), SDG3 (Good Health and Well-being),
- ii. **environmental** dimension of SDG13 (Climate Action) and SDG15 (Life on Land), and
- iii. **economic** dimensions of SDG8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and SDG12 (Responsible Consumption and Production);

Recognising further that NWFPs are at the heart of **Nature-Based Solutions** that protect and restore nature and provide multiple and valuable products and can contribute to the achievement of Europe’s policy priorities, including the European Green Deal (2019), EU Climate Action, new Common Agricultural Policy post 2020, New Industrial Strategy for Europe (2020), European Biodiversity Strategy

(2020), Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe (2020), EU Farm to Fork Strategy (2020), EU Forest Strategy and the Step-up EU action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests (2019);

*Sharing a **joint vision*** that forests and other wooded lands are providers of multiple services and diverse resources, including wood and biomass, but also plants, animals and fungi used as healthy food, medicines, cosmetics, chemicals, textile, decorative and construction materials, that can support the transition towards a sustainable and circular bioeconomy;

Noting that NWFPs can be **sustainably managed**, integrated with wood and other forest services with specific inventory systems, contributing to resilient sustainable landscapes that provide nature-based solutions as well as to efforts related to forest and landscape restoration and the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration;

Further noting that **domestication** may contribute to the expansion of the resource base and development of the knowledge and the conservation of the genetic pool of new cultivated species providing NWFPs and the techniques to sustainably produce them;

Underlining that local producers and collectors of NWFPs often **know and respect** their rights to cultivate, collect and sell the resources of the land, according to national or regional regulations that allow the co-existence of amateur collection and self-consumption with commercial collection and production;

Noting with concern the **weaknesses and threats** that affect the sustainable consumption and production of NWFPs due to the

- i. **lack of systematic knowledge** related to, among others, the systematisation of resources, official data on production, consumption and trade, knowledge on resource levels, distribution, productivity, harvesting and cultivation techniques, domestication, and
- ii. **lack of regulation and management** related to, among others, regulation of activities, formal management, failed markets, transparency and consistent information on value chains and markets, correct identification of production methods and different species through appropriate labelling and quality standards;

Raising concern about **threats** to NWFPs caused by

- i. **climate change** that is already affecting the vitality, structure and function of forest ecosystems menacing numerous habitats and the provision of many NWFPs,
- ii. **uncontrolled or unsustainable harvesting** of wild products that can lead to over-exploitation due to the use of unsustainable, damaging practices, degrading habitats and forest structures,
- iii. **illegal or informal trade** that can damage forests and habitats in producer countries,
- iv. **land use changes** that are reducing the extension and vitality of extensively managed and NWFPs-rich forests and agroforestry landscapes, by forest degradation or forest abandonment;

Noting the role of **Europe as a leading importer** of NWFPs, implying the risk of detrimental effects on environmental quality and social equitability caused by promoting 'unsustainable harvesting' or 'imported deforestation' in supplier countries through NWFP consumption in European markets;

Call for better **targeted and more coherent policies** in order to realise the full contribution of NWFPs to sustainable development and to integrate NWFPs adequately in National Forest Programmes;

Recommend that action is needed at **different territorial levels**, from the international and European to the national, regional, and local, respecting the subsidiarity principle;

Recall that action is needed from different **stakeholders**, including governments and agencies, academia, companies, professionals and sectoral organisations;

Identify as key actions to

- i. secure the **conservation and sustainable supply** of NWFPs by (a) enhancing the resource base, (b) guaranteeing fair and secure access to the resource, (c) promoting sustainable harvest methods, and (d) setting up and improving monitoring systems and inventories,
- ii. **build competitive, equitable and sustainable value chains** by (a) developing innovative, territorial value chains, (b) establishing innovative fiscal and labor regimes, and (c) ensuring equitability and functioning producers' organisations,
- iii. improve **transparency, data and information flow** on NWFPs by (a) improving the visibility of NWFPs in official statistics and (b) enhancing traceability and innovative labelling,
- iv. establish **conducive enabling conditions** by (a) ensuring coherence of institutional action, (b) improving financial support and (c) fostering innovation, knowledge transfer capacity building and sharing of good practices;

Encourage upon the **European Commission** to (a) promote coordinated regional, national and subnational programmes through the integration of NWFPs in the European Forest Strategy and its Action Plans and other relevant strategies and frameworks, and (b) improve labelling and standards for wild products under the Farm to Fork Strategy;

Call upon **national or subnational authorities** to adopt innovative fiscal and labour regimes and implement traceability systems adapted to wild food;

Recommend **sectoral organisations and companies** to stimulate, strengthen and involve producer's organisations and increase transparency of price setting and promote price observatories;

Call upon the **United Nation's System, international organisations and academia** to support countries and stakeholders to carry out above key actions.

As participants of the Policy Forum, we

Note with appreciation the **inputs** provided by INCREDIBLE Consortium, EFI and FAO to the Forum;

Call upon the INCREDIBLE Consortium, EFI and FAO to **continue supporting stakeholders** in the implementation of above key actions; and

Invite interested stakeholders to join this manifesto and **join forces** to unlock the full contribution of NWFPs to inclusive and green growth and eco-social progress in Europe and worldwide.