

Research Article

Forest dependent livelihood in relation to socio-economic status of the people in Chopta-Mandal forest of Garhwal Himalayas, Uttarakhand

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ABSTRACT

The present paper revealed the socio-economic conditions of the villagers with forest resources situated in the close vicinity of Kedarnath wild life sanctuary in Chamoli and Rudraprayag district of Garhwal Himalayas, Uttarakhand. The average family size in study area was found about 5.2 persons per household, the literacy rate in the villages is above 70%, but still due to lack of employment opportunities people invariably depend on forests for their livelihood. In all the study villages more than 75% of fodder and fuelwood were extracted from the forest. Agriculture is more than 90% rainfed which is the main occupation in the study area. Employment as a labourer was the second-largest source of income followed by dairy production. Other sources of income were poultry, goat rearing, government jobs, government pensions, and extraction of minor forest products like wild edible and medicinal plants. In the Mandal valley, approximately 86% of the total fodder was being extracted from the forest. On an average it is accounted about 5.6 animals per households. Almost 75% of the people in study area depend on spring for water consumption. In all the study villages, 100% of the families use wood as the chief source of fuel for cooking and heating, approximately 91% of fuel wood is collected from the forest, and the rest is collected from private lands. A significant or positive correlation was observed between the increase age of the informants with the increase in number of wild edible plants reported. However, no significant correlation was observed between the educational level of informants and the number of species reported by each informant. Local people and forest are intricately linked with each other and their dependency on surrounding forests leading to degradation of forest thus affecting the biodiversity of the region. Lack of employment opportunities is the major cause of dependency of rural people on forest and forcing people to migrate to cities in search of jobs.

Key words: Socio-economic, Dependency, Livelihood, Fuel-wood, Wild edible, Biodiversity

