



India
Healthy forests, healthy people, healthy climate
News from the Field (July 2019–June 2020)

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Conservation International

*This project is implemented by Applied Environmental Research Foundation (AERF), an Indian non-profit organization.



View of community forest in Talwade under conservation agreement

Mapping Threatened Species

Last year, two field surveys were conducted to map endangered wildlife and plant species in the community forest in Talwade village. This community forest has been brought under long term protection via the conservation agreement. The survey results confirmed there are many designated rare or endangered wildlife and plant species, and indigenous plants, such as *Tuna cilliata*, *Bridelia* sp., in the forest. During the monsoon season, the team also spotted many rare and endemic herb species e.g *Ceropegia*. The mapping of wildlife using camera traps is scheduled to be implemented after the monsoon season.

This survey clearly substantiates our hypothesis that saving habitat through conservation activities first will result in avoiding loss of known and unknown species.



Ceropegia evansi (bottom left) – IUCN redlist herb species. Two other herbs were newly found, with the name currently being verified.



Traces of carnivorous wildlife



Pangolin burrow



Review of the Value Chain

Until now, AERF Team has been obtaining the international FAIRWILD certification, but it also began to notice in recent years that it is not taking full advantage of the opportunities presented by the certification itself. To this end, we began to reevaluate our value chain and contemplate a business model that is more attractive to manufacturers. The biggest task in this endeavor was sales negotiation with intermediary buyers.

Typically, intermediary buyers had been purchasing FAIRWILD certified agricultural products at a low cost in powdered form immediately before commercialization and in turn processed them for commercialization (packaging) and exported them at high prices. However, this created a structure where the benefit of the FAIRWILD certification was reaped by the intermediary buyer, leaving no profit returned to the farmers. For this reason, AERF Team entered negotiations with intermediary buyers to communicate that we would be selling final product in higher quantities directly from the community than the semi processed material. While this negotiation took six months to convince our intermediary buyers, the conservation enterprise, Nature Connect, was able to produce and supply a total of 3,900 kg of FW Haritaki powder and 1,200 kg of FW Bibhitaki powder to Phalada Agro in India, in addition to supplying 1,200 kg of FW Triphala powder to Pukka Herbs in the U.K. by November 2019 as a result. This increased the value of the product per unit (kilogram) by 400% compared with the value of the semi processed material.

In addition to more income being generated and increased income for farmers, Nature Connect was able to expand its employment, while farmers are also taking interest in the new job of using grinders.



FW Haritaki husk being dried (top left), husk is processed into powder (top right), packed and labeled at Nature Connect Facility in Sadavali (bottom left) and transported to Phalada Agro, Bangalore (bottom right).



Improving the Health of Forest through Restoration Activities

The unprotected landscapes of the northern Western Ghats have gone through some level of degradation in the past from ageing and development of cashew nut plantations. As such, the extent of intact primary forests in this region is relatively small. AERF field team raises about 5,000 saplings of native, rare and endangered tree species every year at the field station in Sadavali, Ratnagiri and plants these saplings in open and degraded areas of the forest under conservation agreement to prevent further deforestation. Last year, the team planted around 350 saplings representing 18 different tree species in the community forest area in Kalambaste village.



Nursery of native plants at AERF's field station in Sadavali, Ratnagiri



Villagers participate in planting native species in Kalambaste village

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