Collection, Processing and Marketing of Buchanania lanzan (Chironji) in Madhya Pradesh

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Chapter I Buchanania lanzan
1.0 Introduction
1.1 Uses
1.2 Botanical characteristics
1.3 Occurrence and distribution
1.4 Review of literature
1.5 Objectives

Chapter II Production areas and trade centres
2.1 Major chironji producing areas of the state
2.2 Collection of chironji in M.P.
2.3 Quality of chironji
2.4 Important trading centres

Chapter III Collection, harvesting and processing
3.1 Collection and harvesting
3.2 Collection of unripe seeds
3.3 Dimension of unsustainable harvesting
3.4 Processing
3.5 Grading
3.6 Storage
3.7 Packaging

Chapter IV Income from collection
4.1 Dependence on NWFPs for income.
4.2 Prevalence of exchange system.
4.3 Income from chironji collection.

Chapter V Marketing and trade
5.1 Village level marketing
5.2 District level markets
5.3 Regional markets
5.4 National markets
5.5 Marketing channel

Chapter VI Price variations and method of pricing
6.1 Seasonal price variation
6.2 Variation in price due to quality
6.3 Pricing in mandies
6.4 Price integration at different markets

Chapter VII Economics of chironji trade
7.1 Collection cost
7.2 Processing cost
7.3 Economics of chironji processing unit

Chapter IX Conclusion and recommendations
8.1 Trends in chironji
8.2 Recommendations

References
Annexures
CHAPTER - I

BUCHANANIA LANZAN

1.0 Introduction

*Buchanania lanzan,* commonly known as chironji, achar or char is an important tree species, found in mixed dry deciduous forests of Madhya Pradesh. It belongs to the family Anacardiaceae, generally comprising of trees or shrubs. It is a medium sized tree, almost evergreen and leafless only for a short period of time (CSIR, 1948). It was discovered by a Mr. Buchanan Hamilton, a forester in 1798 in Burma. It has a dark grey or black bark, regularly divided into small rectangular plates somewhat resembling a crocodile hide and reddish inside (ICFRE, 1996) *Buchanania lanzan* flowers from January to March with fruits ripening from April to June. The fruit is an ovoid drupe, about 0.5 inch long, black when ripe, with a hard two-valved stone 0.35 to 0.40 inch in diameter enclosing an oilseed (Troup, 1986). The seeds fall before or at the commencement of rainy season.

The collection of fruits is done in May. The tree occurs both in forests and on agricultural land. Collection of fruits is done by farmers on their own land and by the rural population from the forests. The harvesting of chironji fruit is often done in unripe form. The fruit becomes light-black on ripening and is known as pandi. The kernels of ripe fruit are large sized. The seeds known as guthly, are dried and sold in unprocessed form to local traders, who sell it either to wholesalers or to the processing mills.

The traders of these mills use power driven nut-cracking machines known as cool grind to remove kernels. Winnowing and cleaning work is reported to be done by women.

*Chironji* is sold in different grades and is referred to as super quality (bold dana), best (double dana), medium, etc. Grading criteria is according to size, quantity of broken nuts and freshness in taste.

*Chironji* has a very short shelf life. The collection to marketing channel ranges from harvesting of nuts, drying, washing, grinding, sorting, grading, packaging and distribution. The marketing ranges from local to regional and even international as some quantity is exported also.

Earlier, the purchaser/contractor by paying a fixed royalty to the government, had complete rights of collection of chironji fruits over a well-defined area and could stock any amount. In 1986, the royalty system was done away with and the chironji fruits could be traded freely in market.

In view of the economic significance of *Buchanania lanzan* in the state and variable price of different grades of seeds, the trade is beset with several problems. Traders usually fix prices on the basis of percentage by floatation method.

There are some good-quality areas of chironji in the state. Delineation of areas on the basis of quality of chironji fruit is the first essential step to ensure better economic returns. Only a small quantity of guthly is sold during the collection season. Farmers prefer to sell the