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Eco-revolution through Minor forest-based products in the state of Chhattisgarh

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Abstract:

Chhattisgarh is one of the tribal states of India, with a large population of scheduled tribes (30.62% according to the 2011 census survey) out of which most of the tribes reside in the dense forests of north and south Chhattisgarh (CG) and most of them are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood and collection sale of Minor Forest Produce (MFPs), like Sal leaf, Mahua flowers, firewood, weaving, and handicraft. For procurement of these MFPs at Minimum Support Price (MSP) rates, Government schemes are implemented by designated state agencies to ensure fair monetary returns to Minor Forest Produce (MFP) gatherers. The states' 44 percent area comes under forests (third largest in India area-wise), has favorable agroclimatic conditions like good rainfall, comparatively less biotic interference, and availability of cheap labor along with good connectivity to the state capital, which act as catalysts for setting up MFP based industries here. According to industrial policy 2019-2024 of Chhattisgarh, the state offers multiple incentives to MFP and medicinal plant-based industries which is a great opportunity for entrepreneurs and new startups to set up industries and contribute to the sustainable growth and development of the forest dwellers, and the overall economy of the state.

Keywords:

minor forest produce, industries, marketing, non-timber forest products, enterprises

1. Introduction:

Nowadays, demand for organic products is increasing with forest-based products also gaining global popularity. Minor Forest Products are Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) obtained from forests other than timber. Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is a subset of forest produce and got a definition only in 2007 when the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, was enacted. Section 2(i) of the said Act defines a Minor Forest Produce (MFP) as all non-timber forest produce of plant origin and includes bamboo, brushwood, stumps, canes, Tusser, cocoon, honey, waxes, Lac, tendu leaves, medicinal plants, herbs, roots (Rosemary, 2006). MFPs are a great option for forest-dwelling communities and rural households as a livelihood. MFPs have a commercial value and support many small to large-scale industries engaged in the processing or trading of NTFPs and NTFP-based products. NTFPs make a significant contribution to the revenues of the forest department (Mamidi, 2015). But unsustainable harvesting of NTFPs is the root cause of species decline, illegal and unsustainable ways of harvesting NTFPs should be stopped, and sustainable harvesting of economically important NTFPs under government supervision is recommended to alleviate the poverty of the rural mass (Talukdar et al., 2021). The state of Chhattisgarh was bifurcated from Madhya Pradesh on 1 November 2000. Currently, it comprises 33 districts and 5 divisions. Agriculture is the main occupation of the state. It has been blessed with diverse flora and fauna and shares its boundaries with 7 states of India. It has a large network of four-lane and two-lane roads that provide connectivity to major cities. The state has rail connectivity too and it comes under the southeast central railway zone. The air connectivity in the state is improving and has a domestic airport in Raipur which is connected to all major cities of India. According to census 2011, the total population of the state is 2.55 crore. with SC and ST populations being 12.82% and 30.62% respectively. It also has the third largest forest cover in the country after Madhya Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh. Approximately 44% area of the state is covered with forests which have been divided into three categories namely -Reserved forests, Protected forests, and Unclassified Forests. Most of the tribal rural population are agriculturists living in these forest belts and are directly or

indirectly dependent on forest produce for their consumption and/or income. The state has a catchment area of 4 river systems mainly Mahanadi, Ganga, Godavari, and Narmada. The climate of the state is mainly sub-humid and the average annual rainfall is 1200-1500mm. The forest cover of the state is tropical deciduous forest and tropical dry deciduous forest. Many types of vegetation are also important means of livelihood for forest dwellers. The state is full of mineral resources like coal, iron, bauxite, lime, gold, tin, etc. which are mainly found in forest areas. According to the Economic Survey 2020-2021, about 50% of the villages in the state fall within a radius of 5 km from the forest boundary where the residents are mainly tribal and economically backward, and are dependent on forests for their livelihood. Apart from tribals, a large number of landless non-tribals are also dependent on forests. About 7 crore Man-days of employment is generated every year from forestry works. The villagers get minor forest produce and other extension facilities worth about Rs. 2000 crores from the forests. Thus, forests have a special place in the sustainable and all-round development of the state.

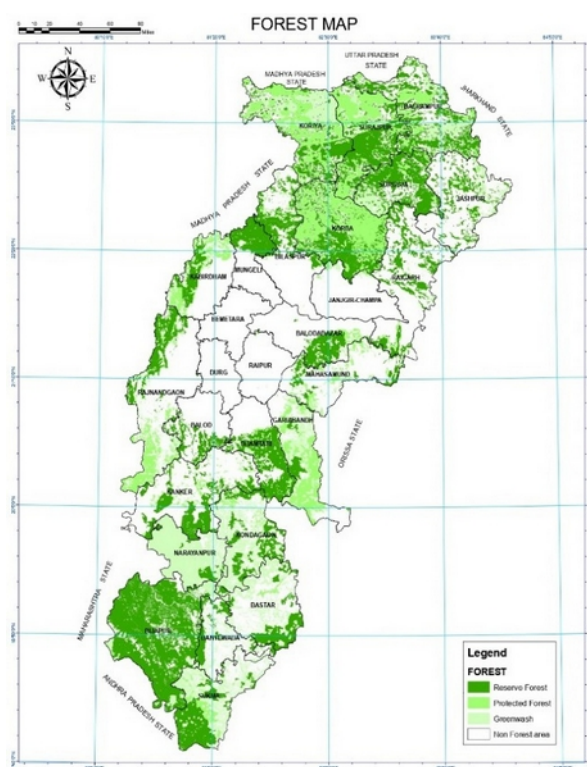


Fig.1: Forest Map of Chhattisgarh

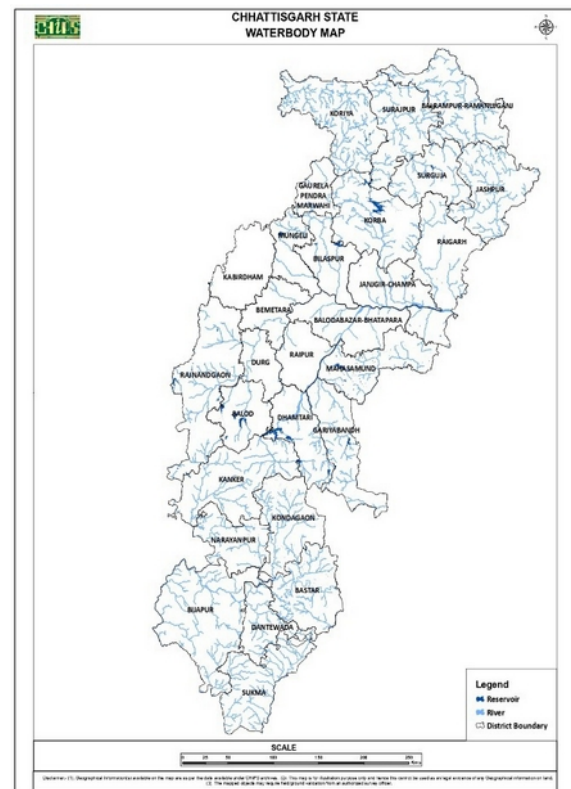


Fig.2 Waterbody Map of

Source: Directorate of Industries, Chhattisgarh
Commerce & Industries

Source: Department of

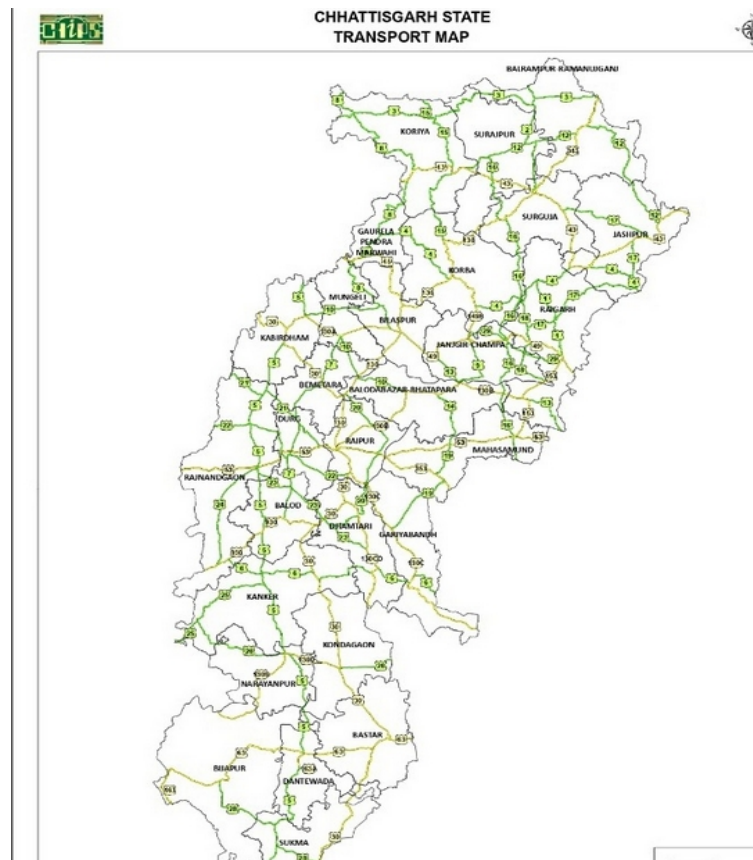


Fig.3: Transport Map of Chhattisgarh

Fig.1, Fig.2 & Fig.3 show the forest, waterbody, and transport map of Chhattisgarh respectively. In Fig.1, the forest cover is mainly seen in Chhattisgarh's north and south regions. These regions are rich in biodiversity and are divided into different circles as per administrative requirements. Fig.2 shows the rivers and drainage system of Chhattisgarh. Fig. 3 is the road transport map showing national and state highways, connecting areas with district headquarters and capital.

2.Review of literature:

(Johnson, T.S., Agarwal, R.K. & Agarwal, A. 2013) in their paper highlights the importance of Non-Timber Forest Produce and its

contribution to rural and local economies. Many rural households around the world are depended on forest produce for livelihood. Government welfare schemes, agencies, and societies play an important role in income generation from NTFPs. The role of NTFPs collectors in the value chain pyramid is very important as they are the base of the pyramid that has to be sustained for a long time.

(Shukla , N. and Pandey , S. 2015) The paper ‘A Study of Marketing of Forest Produce of Chhattisgarh State’ analyzes the marketing pattern of forest products its” role in income generation and states’ contribution to maintaining its markets and to understand the marketing problems and suggestions. Purposive sampling is taken into consideration with a sample size of 400 and data collection by primary and secondary data.

(Islam , M.A. , & Quli , S.M.S. 2017).Minor forest products play an important role in tribal livelihood. The study was done by employing a multi-stage random sampling technique in selected villages. Interviews and non-participant observations for data collection and analysis using descriptive statistics like range, mean, percent, and frequency. The result revealed maximum and minimum shares in household and average income earned in a year from different species composition and availability of NTFPs in different seasons. NTFPs are a driving force for socioeconomic development in tribes and rural areas.

(Painkra, M. , Dutta , J. & Ranga , M.M. 2017) The socio-economic survey of non-wood forest products in the Surguja district of Chhattisgarh, India proves that forest-based products are an alternative source of income for forest dwellers. It has helped marginal families to come out of the agrarian crisis. It’s a good source of income opportunity for women collectors and increases the standard of living of tribal folks. Through pre-tested questionnaires the baseline data were collected by randomly interviewing in 4 villages. The income distribution of selected villages is measured by the Lorenz curve and income equality by the Gini coefficient. The survey shows the percentage of NWFP contribution of selected markets, different categories of NWFP, and seasonal availability of NTFP. Thus NWFP has potential in the future.

(Gupta, A.K., Sharma, M.L. & Singh, L. 2017)The paper shows the utilization pattern of NTFPs among the tribal population of the Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh. An ex-post facto research design was used in the study. Primary data collection was done from 135 respondents by personal interviews. The study also estimates the average quantity collected, consumed, and sold with average annual income. The findings show that the respondents were involved in the collection of various NTFPs throughout the year. Some parts of forest products were used for self-consumption and others were sold out.

(Guleria , C. et.al ,2021) As per the Government of India, 20-40% of tribal's annual income comes from NTFP. Forest products are a part of the livelihood of India's tribal lives as a source of cash income. One of the important sources of income comes from tendu tree leaves. Leaves provide seasonal employment, it is used in making leaf plates, used in the bidi industry, and many more thus providing people an income opportunity, who are mostly involved in the collection of leaves.

3.Objective:

- a. To study the scope of MFP-based industries in Chhattisgarh
- b. To study the policies of the Chhattisgarh government for promoting MFP industries

4.Research Methodology:

The study solely depends upon secondary data collected from government sites and journals of different departments. It is a descriptive study with no primary data collection. It analyses the secondary data for a more clear understanding of the topic.

5.Scope For Minor Forest-Based Industries:

The geographical and demographic profile of Chhattisgarh makes the state favorable for MFP-based enterprises/industries. The state is full of

natural resources and a wide variety of species of flowers, seeds, medicinal plants, herbs/shrubs, fruits, etc. It comes under central India landlocked by Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana connecting it with major cities in India. Agriculture is the main employment in the state which has led to brisk growth in the food processing industry. It is one of the leading producers of Tussar and Kosa silks in the country. As per the report of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade 2019, the state ranks 6th in the Ease of doing business Index. Various micro and small enterprises are registered in the state which are either run by NGOs, self-help groups, or proprietors. But forest-based non-wood timber products are in demand due to their purity. If the demand continues to increase, the state can emerge as one of the leading producers of minor forest-based products. In the year 2020-2021, 52 types of minor forest produce were purchased at the minimum support price. According to a report of Chhattisgarh State Minor Forest Produce (Trading & Development) Co-operative Federation Ltd., in the year 2020-2021, forest produces worth Rs.158 crore has been collected. In this way, the Chhattisgarh state minor forest produce association secured first position in the entire country by collecting 77.02% of minor forest produce at minimum support price which directly benefitted the forest dwellers.

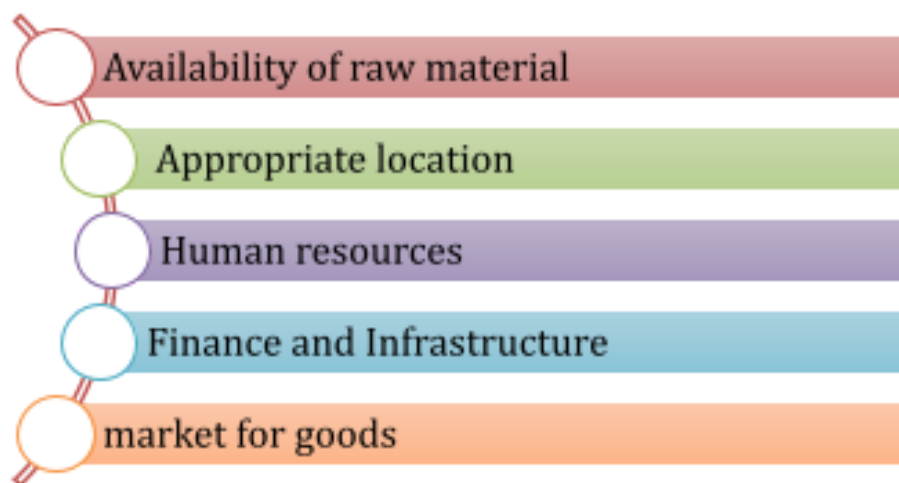


Fig.4 Factors for Industrial set up

For any industry to set up, some basic requirements are needed. Fig.4 shows five factors required for setting up any industry. In the case of Minor forest-based industries, Chhattisgarh has favorable conditions which attract forest-based industries. It has different types of flora

species which are of commercial importance and used for medicinal purposes like tendu leaves, tamarind seeds, manhwa, honey, sal seeds, flowers, kernels, bamboo, lac, etc. The geographical location with good transport facilities and physical features like topography, natural drainage, agroclimatic conditions, and forests makes the state suitable for setting up MFP-based industries. The state comes under the tribal belt and 30.62% of tribes mostly dwell near forests, lack of employment opportunities and the need for an alternate source of income makes them dependent on forest products and makes them cheap labor. Infrastructure facilities in the form of roads, electricity, and cold storage have recently been improved by the government and MFPs are purchased at reasonable rates. The government also provides easy finance facilities from banks through various schemes. The market for forest-based products is gaining popularity, due to its increasing demand and wide product range like gourmet foods, personal care, and health care in other states and countries too. In 2018 Van Dhan Centres were launched in the state to improve tribal income. Thus the scope for MFP based industry in Chhattisgarh is huge. Other than tendu leaves many other types of MFPs are found in different regions of the state as per season. Given below is the list of 52 types of MFP under MSP in the year 2020-21.

Table 1

S.No.	Name of MFPs	Rates determined by Govt. of India(Rs/Kg)	Proposition for increase/decrease of 10% on rates of MSP	MSP rates by CG govt.(Rs./kg)
1.	Tamarind with seeds	36.00	-	36.00
2.	Mahua seeds	29.00	-	29.00
3.	kalmegh	35.00	-	35.00
4.	Nagarmotha	30.00	-	30.00
5.	Bael pulp	30.00	-	30.00
6.	Honey	225.00	-	225.00
7.	Hill broom grass	50.00	-	50.00
8.	Mahua flower(dried)	30.00	-	30.00
9.	Jamun seeds(dried)	42.00	-	42.00
10.	Kaunch seeds	21.00	-	21.00

11.	Dhavai flowers(dried)	37.00	-	37.00
12.	Karanj seed	22.00	-	22.00
13.	Baybiding	94.00	-	94.00
14.	Amla with seeds	52.00	-	52.00
15.	Tamarind (de-seeded)	69.00	-	69.00
16.	Sal seed	20.00	-	20.00
17.	Chironji Pods I (Grade A) II (Grade B)	126.00 115.00	- - -	- 1 2 6. 0 0 115.00
18.	Harra	15.00	-	15.00
19.	Baheda	17.00	-	17.00
20.	Puwad seeds	16.00	-	16.00
21.	Giloy	40.00	-	40.00
22.	bhelwa	09.00	-	09.00
23.	Kusmi lac	275.00	Increase in Rs.25/kg	300.00
24.	Ragini lac	200.00	Increase in Rs 20/kg	220.00
25.	Gum of Kullu	114.00	Increase in Rs.11/kg	125.00
26.	Ban tulsi seeds	16.00	-	16.00
27.	Ban jeera seeds	70.00	-	70.00
28.	Tamarind seeds	11.00	-	11.00
29.	Baheda kachariya	20.00	-	20.00

30.	Harra kachariya	23.00	Increase in Rs.2/kg	25.00
31.	Neem seeds	27.00	-	27.00
32.	Kusum seeds	23.00	-	23.00
33.	Washnut fruit(dried)	14.00	-	14.00
34.	Shikakai poda(dried)	50.00	-	50.00
35.	Shatavari roots(dried)	107.00	-	107.00
36.	Cashew kernel I (Grade A) II(Grade B)	90.00 81.00	-	90.00 81.00
37.	Malkangini seeds	100.00	-	100.00
38.	Mahul leaves	15.00	-	15.00
Rates are fixed by Govt. of India				
1.	Palash flower	11.00	-	11.00
2.	White Musli(dried)	650.00	-	650.00
3.	Indrajau	150.00	-	150.00
4.	Patal kumda	30.00	-	30.00
5.	Dry Kutuj/conessi bark	12.00	-	12.00
6.	Ashwagandha	350.00	-	350.00
7.	Raw Amla	28.00	-	28.00
8.	Sewai grass	15.00	-	15.00
9.	Kanta jhadu	32.00	-	32.00
10.	Tikhur	25.00	-	25.00
11.	Bihan lac -kusumi	300.00	-	300.00
12.	Bihan lac -rangini	220.00	-	220.00
13.	Raw bael	10.00	-	10.00
14.	Raw jamun	23.00	-	23.00

Source: CGMFPFED, 20th AGM report, 2020-21

6.Role of Government in Promoting MFPs :

The Government policies and schemes have great significance for various forest-based tribes and gatherers. The MFP-based schemes have been decentralized with the involvement of district-level functionaries. To promote transformative growth of tribal communities the Forest Rights Act of 2006 and the PESA (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996 give the forest dwellers the legal authority to own and manage the MFP. The Act was passed to safeguard the socioeconomically disadvantaged segment of citizens and strike a balance between their right to the environment and their right to life and a means of

subsistence. But there are a lot of issues. The tribal and other local populations that depend on the forests are nonetheless marginalized, impoverished, and denied just compensation. ‘Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produces (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of Value Chain for MFP’ was formulated in 2013-14 by the

Ministry of Tribal Affairs as a solution to their problems and to ensure fair returns. The MSP for the MFP scheme's key objective is to create a framework for guaranteeing reasonable rates for tribal gatherers, primary processing, storage, transportation, etc. while preserving the resource base.

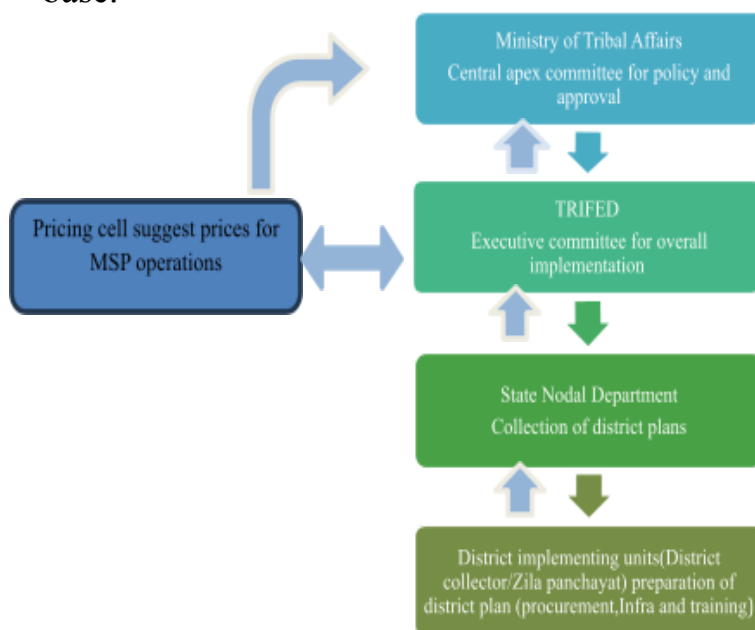


Fig.5 Monitoring Committees for MFP Source: Ministry for Tribal Affairs, MSP for MFP Guidelines

Fig.5 shows the monitoring and scheme implementation of MSP for the MFP scheme as approved by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India. The central apex committee headed by the secretary of, ministry of tribal affairs approves overall packages after representation by the state nodal department followed by an executive committee headed by the managing director of, the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India(TRIFED). It set up an IT/MIS platform to oversee the implementation and facilitate training programs. Pricing cell setup in TRIFED recommends MSP which is announced by the apex committee. The State Nodal Department ensures overall implementation in the state headed by the chief secretary. At the district level it is headed by district collectors, The committee submits the district plan to the state nodal which is further forwarded to the apex committee for approval.

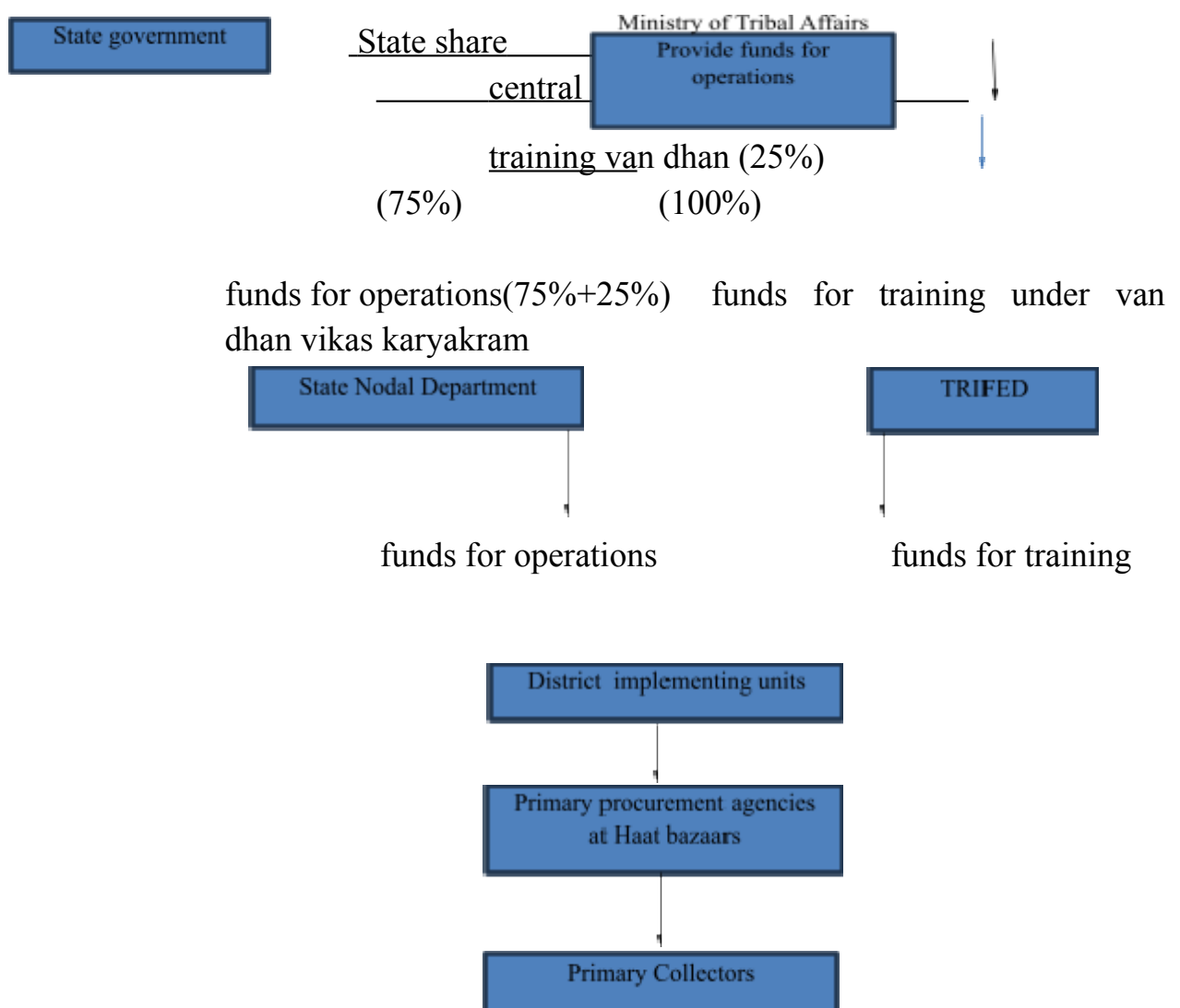


Fig.6 Fund Flow Mechanism

Source: Ministry for Tribal Affairs, MSP for MFP Guidelines

Fig.6 shows the fund flow for performing operations and training for different committees. District implementing units get their funds for operations and training from the state nodal department and TRIFED. The committee comprises officials from Tribal, Forest, Rural

Development, Zila Panchayat, Agriculture, NIC, and Revenue formations. Primary-level procurement at Haat Bazaars will be done through the engagement of Primary Procurement Agencies such as Cooperative Societies/ LAMPS/ Mahila Samities/VDCs/JFMCs/ self-help groups (SHGs) formed in the State including those formed under the National Rural Livelihood Mission constituting of local tribal majority members etc. selected by the District Collector in consultation with the Gram Panchayat. The buyers including Government led SHGs would also operate in the Haat Bazaars regulated by the Gram Sabha as per provisions of the PESA Act 1996 and FRA, Act 2006. Haat bazaars are the basis for the marketing

centers namely, Van dhan vikas kendras (Notified by Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, 2019).

Chhattisgarh State Minor Forest Produce (Trading and Development) Co-operative Federation Limited(CGMFPFED)is the State level apex body responsible for the state's development and trade of the minor forest sector. Through district-level cooperative unions, the apex organization carries out several tasks, including the collection, storage, and trade of MFPs as well as the payment of collectors. By inviting participants at the national level, it disposes off certain non-timber forest produce through e-tenders and e-auctions. Additionally, it provides policy formation advice to the State Government on MFP marketing, collection, value addition, and conservation. The units at the Forest Division level that are in charge of the production/collection, transportation, and storage of MFPs are called Forest Produce Cooperative District Unions. This governing body plans the field strategy and assesses how well District Unions are doing with the tasks they have been given. Primary cooperative societies, which were established with the participation of MFP collectors, are in charge of collecting MFP at the collection center level. Phad Munshis, who have been chosen by the societies for the job, oversee the collection centers. Officials from the Forest Department oversee and direct these collecting

centers. Other than the Van dhan yojana, MSP scheme different Welfare schemes are also run by central and state govt. for the livelihood of MFP gatherers and their families. Some of the welfare schemes are remuneration and travel allowances, distribution of charanpadukas to one member in each family of tendu leaves gatherers from 2006-07 onwards, an insurance scheme for tendu leaves gatherers, and education promotion schemes. Under CG Industrial policy 2019-2024 herbal, medicinal plant and minor forest produce industries are on the list of high-priority industries. The strategy is to provide more incentives to these industries and promote Chhattisgarh as a herbal state and improve the sale of herbal products. According to Van Dhan Yojana, March 2020 report, Chhattisgarh has 139 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, 2085 self-help groups, and 41,700 tribal entrepreneurs.

7. Conclusion: The paper briefly discusses the scope of MFPs in the state and how govt. helps promote these MFPs for value addition and income generation of rural and tribal populations. Chhattisgarh is blessed with sufficient natural and human resources and has the potential to become the leading supplier of MFP based products in India and provide an economically viable livelihood option to forest dwellers. The government has been implementing various policies and schemes in this direction such as Forest Rights Act, 2006, PESA Act of 1996, MSP rates implementation in 2013-14 to encourage the growth of tribal communities and assure fair returns to them. Startups and MSMEs' are being encouraged to setup MFP based industries in Chhattisgarh by providing hassle free digitalized process and minimum documentation for setting up their businesses. Moreover, easy finance facilities from banks are provided to them. Even so, many areas still need to be looked upon so as to fully realise the state's potential in MFP's. Some of the steps can be providing Productivity linked incentives to MFP based industries, raising awareness among people for the use of organic forest based products as a healthy option over processed inorganic products and including more MFP's in the MSP rate list. Doing so may help the state to achieve the target of becoming a MFP based industries hub in the near future.

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