

# Informal Work in a New Book on Work in Tropical Forests

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Fig. 1: Manual Log Transport (Oregon)

## Work in the Forests

More than one billion people are living in or near tropical forests, most belonging to the poorest in the world. Also many urban people depend on forest resources. They all work in the tropical forests for their livelihood. Working conditions for women are particularly hard (Fig. 3). Most of the work is done in the informal economy, much by illegal logging (Box 1).

## People in Forest Work

13.2 Mio formal jobs in the forest sector are exceeded by far by the 41 Mio of informally employed (FAO, 2014). 3.5 Mio are formally employed in forestry, 5.4 Mio in enterprises producing solid wood products, and 4.3 Mio in pulp and paper production. 2.5 Mio are formally employed in forestry in Africa, Asia and Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean together. The data are of different quality.



Fig. 3: Women Bundling Harvesting Residuals (Oregon)



Fig. 2: Manual Plank Sawing (Indonesia)

## Subsistence Employment

The people living from the forests were hunting and gathering or doing shifting cultivation, in agroforestry. They used Non Wood Forest Products (NWFP) as well as wood, primarily as fuel wood and construction material. This was done – and to some degree still is – in a subsistence economy (Fig. 4).

## Box 1: Self-Employment (OECD, 2015)

"The forestry sector is characterized by a high degree of informality (75.65 per cent), particularly in developing countries. This is in large part due to the expansion of illegal logging activities [...].

There are six categories of informal workers [...]:

- Own-account workers (self-employed with no employees) in their own informal economy enterprises;
- Employers (self-employed with employees) in their own informal economy enterprises;
- Contributing family workers, regardless of type of enterprise;
- Members of informal producers' cooperatives (not established as legal entities);
- Employees holding informal jobs as defined according to the employment relationship (in law or in practice, jobs not subject to national labour legislation, income tax, social protection or to certain employment benefits);
- Own-account workers engaged in production of goods exclusively for own final use by their household."

## References

- FAO (2014) State of the World's Forests 2014: Enhancing the Socioeconomic Benefits from Forests, Rome.  
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All photos taken by the author.

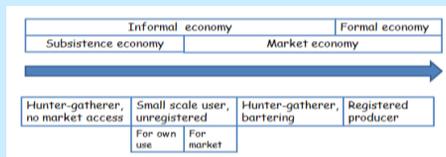


Fig. 4: Subsistence and Self-employed Activities (Lewark, 2019)

## People in Woodfuel Production

In the analysis of FAO (2014) on informal employment numbers have been calculated from estimates of production and productivity, for woodfuel and construction wood for local use. The number of people required amounts to 115.3 Mio Full Time Equivalents (FTE) for rural use, thereof 74.5 Mio FTE for firewood and 6.4 Mio FTE for charcoal, for urban use 18.3 Mio FTE for firewood, 18.1 Mio FTE for charcoal (Fig. 5). Because of working part-time, 882 Mio involved have been estimated. A great deal of wood and NWFP are provided from trees growing outside forests (FAO, 2016).

## Challenges, Responsibility

The future of forests worldwide and especially of tropical forests and the fate of the respective societies living in and from the forests, and of the global society, are dependent on the forests and at stake today. This future is strongly connected with the work of many living in the forests, which should be decent work. Here lies the challenge and responsibility of foresters and forest scientists, in particular of the human oriented forest work scientists.



Fig. 5: Charcoal Kiln (Crete)