

## Determination of consumer preferences and trends on non-wood forest products in Balıkesir Province scale

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**Abstract:** Growing in the forests and open spaces, all kinds of plant, animal and mineral products that humans and other living things have used to meet their needs or to provide income are generally defined as "non-wood forest products". Non-wood forest products offer various economic, social and environmental benefits, and also contribute significantly to the socio-economic situation of forest villagers living in and around the forest. Turkey has a very important potential in terms of herbaceous forest products, especially with its rich plant diversity, wildlife resources and different climate. Especially in the fields of medicine, food and cosmetics, the use of many non-wood herbal products has increased, and a great market has been created in the world. For this reason, the aim of this article is to determine the structure, consumption tendency and preference of final consumers in relation to non-wood forest productions in Balıkesir province. A questionnaire consisting of 2 parts and 23 questions was used in the study. In the first part of the questionnaire, it is aimed to determine the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the consumers. In the second part, it is aimed to determine consumption trends and preferences. 204 questionnaires were taken into consideration in the study. In the analyses, all the questions and answers were digitized according to the sequence statistics, and frequencies and percentages were used according to the characteristics of the questions. Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test to explore the associations between the variables. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 20.0 program was used in the analyses. According to the results of this research; (1) The consumers use non-wood herbal forest products for general health, therapy and for pleasure, (2) They are consumed as infusion and decoction on large scale, (3) There is a big deficiency by means of using dose and side effect, (4) As the level of education of the consumers increases, they are more careful about the consumption amount (dosage) and side effects, (5) The products are usually purchased from people selling herbal products, (6) The products are generally consumed as they are collected from nature, (7) Products are purchased from places that are thought to be clean and hygienic, (8) Among the factors affecting consumption behaviors, recommendations of family and relatives come first. (9) A large proportion of consumers prefer to consume their products without any treatment. In this regard, traditionality dominates the formation of consumption habits. From the findings, it is suggested that the products should be presented to the consumers in hygienic environments in their natural state, and that they should include promotional forms containing usage information and dosage information with the products.

**Keywords:** Non-wood forest products, Consumer characteristics, Consumption tendency, Consumption preference, Balıkesir