Action research: NWFPs as a branch of Austrian Nature Park Specialities

1. Basic situation

The “Austrian Nature Park Specialities” is a label of the Association of Austrian Nature Parks, currently mainly used for products of agriculture and food processing craft. One part of “Austrian Nature Park Specialities” already consists of nwfps.

The farms/ firms of the producers are quite small and thus the amounts they produce are small as well. The production is often hardly profitable, producers are widely scattered, their offers are not bundled. As tourism is well developed in Nature Park regions there is the possibility to generate added value in trading nwfps combined with touristic offers such as “Farm holidays“, guided walking tours etc.

2. Objective(s)

- Raising awareness and impart knowledge about nwfps among the farmers in the Austrian Nature Parks
- Increasing income opportunities of farmers and landowners in the Nature Parks
- Developing new processing and merchandising facilities
- Supporting the existing and future nwfps-producers by building networks for a common and therefore stronger market appearance
- Preparing business plans for an enterprise which serves as a hub for combining the scattered productions

3. Progress to date lessons learnt

Phone Survey in all Nature Parks regarding nwfps. Findings:

- In 18 out of 48 Austrian Nature Parks nwfps are currently processed.
- Manufacturers who use wild fruits normally also use fruits from orchards and orchard meadows, manufacturers of wild herbs also use herbs from the garden
- Wild fruits are normally taken from hedges and the edges of woods (blackthorn, rowan berries, cornelian cherries etc) they are rarely “pure” forest plants. Sometimes the use of nwfps is embedded in touristic offers: guided tours, cookery courses (e.g. cooking from the meadow), festivals (e.g. chestnut-festival)

Broad information on nwfps to the Nature Park managers:

Two events with the aim to share information, raise awareness and collect ideas have taken place so far.

Business plan for an enterprise:

In Nature Park Südsteiermark a businessplan for an enterprise which can serve as a hub for combining the scattered production and merchandise from several sources (special focus on herbs) was elaborated.

Upcoming steps:

- Naturpark Kaunergrat: This Nature Park currently offers the biggest amount of products of all Nature Parks. A new product line resp. a new merchandising line that focus on tourism are about to be developed
- Naturpark Almenland: “Colourful hedges and edges of woods“– Planting of regional trees and bushes (like rowan, blackthorn, cornelian cherries etc.) on edges of woods or other suitable places with the aim to process the fruits. Economical analysis for these actions

This project has received funding from the European Union’s Seventh Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement No 311919

Marelli Asamer-Handler
Asamer-Handler&CO OG
asamer.handler@oear.at

StarTree
Multipurpose trees and non-wood forest products, a challenge and opportunity
www.star-tree.eu