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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Man's need for wood started in pre-historic times. The Early man relied on wood for survival, shelter, tools and hunting implements such as clubs, spears, bows and arrows. The wild forests served sufficiently as the original source of wood. Inadvertently, in his search for wood from the forests, man discovered other benefits of forest trees, especially wood products and by-products, and innumerable beneficial services such as biodiversity conservation and recreation. Thus, the roles of forests in providing significant economic, social, religious and environmental values to man cannot be over-emphasised.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to discuss the economic importance of forests to man.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Importance of Forests**

#### **3.1.1 Forest Products**

These include:

- a) timber, sawn timber, used for various construction works including furniture-making;
- b) fruits and other food items (tubers, leaves) to supplement man's dietary nutrient requirements;
- c) fodder tree species such as for livestock feeding;
- d) ethno-medicare, through herbs used for medicinal purposes;
- e) wildlife that supplies animal protein;
- f) chewing sticks and sponges;

- g) raw materials for handicraft and small-scale enterprises e.g. fibres of *Pandanus* used for weaving mats and baskets, and rattans for making furniture items;
- h) non-timber forest products (NTFPs) such as culinary materials, dietary supplements, mushrooms, ferns, sponge and charcoal;
- i) fuel wood and pole from timber;
- j) industrial raw materials such as latex, gum and resins; and
- k) provision of materials that are of cultural and religious significance e.g. leaves of *Newbouldia laevis*, used during traditional chieftaincy coronation; dedication of some forests to the worship of deities and traditional gods (sacred/fetish groves).

### 3.2 Forest Services

Modern forestry is aimed at assisting forests to:

- i. provide and conserve biodiversity for wildlife habitat;
- ii. regulate natural water, including water flow and water erosion;
- iii. stimulate recreation, through eco-tourism;
- iv. enhance landscape and community protection;
- v. provide employment;
- vi. provide aesthetically appealing landscapes;
- vii. provide a “sink” for atmospheric carbon-dioxide (through carbon sequestration), in order to purify air and water, and prevent global warming by greenhouse gases;
- viii. detoxify and decompose wastes;
- ix. generate and renew soil fertility;
- x. stabilize the climate and moderate temperature extremes; and
- xi. provide windbreak and shelterbelt;
- xii. provide foreign exchange;
- xiii. provide employment opportunities; and

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have learned that forests are important for the provision of both timber and non-timber products, cultural and religious benefits and services, such as biodiversity, relaxation and employment.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

Forests are highly valued not only for timber and non-timber products, but also for cultural, religious benefits and services which ensure safe environment for man’s development and survival.

### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) In what two broad ways do forests serve Man?
- 2) Outline any four products and six services of forests.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology, The Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria. *Introduction to General Agriculture* (CSP 201).

Forest Products. <http://www.forestproducts.co.uk/>