

Terms of Reference

Project:	“Biodiversity mainstreaming into Sectoral Policies and Practices and Strengthen Protection of Biodiversity Hot-spots in Montenegro”
Job title:	Strengthening the Institutional and Organizational Framework for Sustainable Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) Harvesting and Trade
Duration of assignment:	01st April 2025 to 31st March 2026
Location:	Home based, Montenegro

Background:

The project “Biodiversity mainstreaming into Sectoral Policies and Practices and Strengthen Protection of Biodiversity Hot-spots in Montenegro” is geographically focused on the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) of Montenegro and includes various types of interventions and involves both ecosystem protection and work with production sectors, such as tourism, agriculture and forestry.

The Component 1 of the proposed project deals with the management constraints associated with the Protected Areas (PAs) estate and unprotected biodiversity hot-spots. The project provides for the improved management of the pilot PAs in order to ensure compliance with the international requirements, guidelines and best practices for protection of valuable biodiversity within the KBAs and other international biodiversity hot-spots. Through spatial planning instruments, the project promotes concrete solutions for valuable and threatened biodiversity conservation outside the PA’s.

The Component 2 targets the productive landscape outside PAs and in the vicinity of KBAs, where the project addresses the sectoral threats to biodiversity via mainstreaming biodiversity-friendly practices and adjust the sectoral development scenarios for tourism, agriculture and forestry to take into account the potential impact on biodiversity.

This assignment falls within the *Component 2, Output 4.1: Best-practice standards mainstreaming biodiversity-friendly forestry practices* developed with the main goal to promote sustainable development and enhance livelihoods for local communities through the management and use of NTFPs.

Purpose and objectives of the assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to address the key challenges facing Montenegro's Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) sector, including regulatory gaps, unsustainable harvesting practices, market inefficiencies, and economic and social constraints, while promoting ecological sustainability and socio-economic development. The assignment focuses on developing a comprehensive framework to establish a functional and inclusive NTFP association to organize and empower stakeholders, raise their capacities, support sustainable practices, and enhance value chain efficiency.

Job content

The work will consist of the following main tasks:

Stakeholder identification and engagement - Identify relevant stakeholders and engage them through appropriate channels (e.g. surveys, interviews, focus groups, media and social networks etc). Promote active participation of local communities in the association, ensuring that marginalized groups, especially women and remote rural communities are included.

Organizational and Governance Support - Conduct an analysis of potential models for associations of NTFP, drawing from stakeholder input, local practices, and international best practices. The analysis should evaluate feasibility, sustainability, and inclusivity of proposed association models.

Develop and set up the most feasible association model - Based on the stakeholder assessment of the proposed association model, design and help set up a transparent, accountable governance framework for the most feasible NTFP association, including defining roles and responsibilities, organisational bodies, operational and communication modes. If the selected model requires it, assist in legally establishing the NTFP association, ensuring it has a clear mission, structure, and legal recognition. Prepare all the relevant documents for registration as well as act on systematisation, workplan for the first year, proposal of memorandum and travel orders and capacity building programme.

Capacity building – develop and deliver a capacity building program on NTFP, tailored-made for the NTFP harvesters. The program should include the following components:

Capacity-building in management: Provide training to NTFP stakeholders on how to manage the association effectively, including financial management, communication and decision-making processes. Place particular focus on organisational sustainability. Include instructions on monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management, strategic planning and results based management.

Capacity building in sustainable harvesting practices: This training should contain the following modules:

- national and international legislative and policy framework related to nature protection and NTFP harvesting and compliance with it
- forest ecosystems, biodiversity and ecosystem services, climate change (mitigation and adaptation)
- sustainable practices for harvesting target NTFPs -with the focus on forest berries, mushrooms, medicinal plants, to ensure minimal ecological impact, including sustainable extraction methods that respect biodiversity. Include instructions.
- safety procedures during harvesting including the proper use of tools and equipment, awareness of hazards in the field, safe handling and storage techniques, ergonomic practices to prevent injuries

Capacity building in product development - Conduct workshops and provide instructions (guidelines) on creating value-added products from NTFPs. Include instructions on: processing and packaging that ensures safety of food products (compliance with the food safety standards); packaging and branding to increase market ability of products; available certification schemes; potentials for establishing and maintaining plantations of target species. Place particular focus on local knowledge and traditional processing methods or products.

The complete training program should be delivered at least once in person for the target NTFP stakeholders. The set of materials for training, containing presentations, teaching tools, guidelines etc, should be compiled and delivered as the package that can be used for subsequent trainings, and along the proposed protocol that mandates companies to engage harvesters who have completed recognized training and capacity-building programs.

Support institutional setup for engaging trained harvesters in commercial operations – In cooperation with the Agency for Environmental Protection, the Forestry Administration, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (Forestry Directorate) and companies engaged in NTFP trade develop, propose and verify a standardized protocol that mandates companies to engage harvesters who have completed recognized training and capacity-building programs. Identify and propose the most feasible model for integrating the capacity building program into the operations of the above stated stakeholders.

In all tasks, the Contractor shall ensure the mainstreaming of gender considerations across all activities and deliverables. This includes actively promoting the meaningful participation and representation of women in consultations, workshops, and decision-making processes; conducting gender-sensitive assessments to evaluate the potential impacts of proposed practices, protocols, and interventions on women and men; and collecting, analyzing, and presenting gender-disaggregated data in all analyses, reports, and recommendations. The Contractor is expected to integrate gender perspectives as a cross-cutting priority, ensuring that the project's outcomes contribute to greater gender equity and inclusiveness.

Expected deliverables

Task: Stakeholder identification and engagement

Expected outputs:

- meetings with stakeholders (NTFP harvesters, companies for NTFP trade/import-export, Forestry Administration, Agency for Environmental Protection, and other relevant stakeholders), verified by reports, participation lists, photos, and ensuring meaningful representation of women

Task: Organizational and Governance Support

Expected outputs:

- report on the analysis of association models and their feasibility and the proposal of the most feasible model, including assessment of the impacts on women

Task: Develop and set up the most feasible association model

Expected outputs:

- proposed structure of the NTFP association, with defined roles and responsibilities (ensuring women representation in decision making), protocols of communication and operation, and the capacity building plan)
- set of documents for formal/legal registration of the association (e.g. filled in forms, written statute and others required by the relevant legal act, workplan for the first year, memorandum and travel orders, etc.)

Task: Capacity building

Expected outputs:

- one capacity building event on management delivered in person for the duration of at least 2 days for at least 5 participants interested in managing the proposed association
- one capacity building event on sustainable harvesting practices (with mandatory modules described above) delivered in person for the duration of at least 2 days for at least 15 NTFP harvesters
- one capacity building event on product development delivered in person for the duration of at least 2 days for at least 15 stakeholders (harvesters, NTFP trade companies' representatives)
- training materials in the form of presentations, tools, reading materials, guidelines etc. as a package that can be used in subsequent trainings

Task:Support institutional setup for engaging trained harvesters in commercial operations

Expected outputs:

- proposal of the most feasible model for integrating the capacity building program into the operations of the key stakeholders (NTFP trade companies, national institutions)
- proposal of the protocol that mandates companies to engage harvesters who have completed recognized training and capacity building program, verified by the relevant stakeholders

Expected output:

- final report documenting the process and lessons learned

The Company is expected to report to the Project Manager and Chief Technical Specialist on a weekly basis through phone calls, e-mails, and in-person and online meetings.

The Company will submit all the agreed contract deliverables in electronic form, in the appropriate file formats in Montenegrin.

Duration of the assignment and timetable

The assignment should be implemented during 12 months in the period of 01st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

Timetable:

Deliverables to be submitted until 30th July 2025:

- Meetings with stakeholders
- Report on the analysis of association models and their feasibility
- Proposed structure of the NTFP association with the accompanying registration documents, workplan for the first year, memorandum and travel orders, act on systematisation and capacity building programme;

Deliverables to be submitted until 30th January 2026:

- Capacity building program (three workshops)

- Training materials developed and compiled

Deliverables to be submitted until 15th March 2026:

- Proposal of the protocol that mandates companies to engage trained harvesters
- Proposal of the most feasible model for institutionalising the capacity building program
- Final report documenting the process and lessons learned

Reporting:

Provide three reports, in English or local language, to Project Manager and Chief Technical Specialist as follows:

- a. Progress report, no longer than 3 pages, including submission of all deliverables requested until 30th July 2025;
- b. Progress report, no longer than 3 pages, including submission of all deliverables requested until 30th January 2026
- c. Final report, including submission of all deliverables requested until 15th March 2026.