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## Value Addition to Minor Forest Produce: Gateway to Economic Empowerment of Jharkhand Tribals

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### Abstract

In all, about a billion people rely on forests for their food, fuel and income. In India alone, forests account for over a fifth of the country's total geographical area. Of this, Jharkhand consists of 23,605 sq. km, that is, 29.61 per cent. Here, eight out of ten tribals live in and around forests. About 60 per cent of these tribals are dependent on forests. Despite this, it is a matter of extreme paradox that nothing is being done in the state to utilise forests and its minor produce though things are being done to strengthen the horticulture mission catering to only 17 per cent of cultivable land. This article brings out the facts how 'value addition' to minor forest produce (MFP) can not only generate income opportunity for tribals of Jharkhand but can also add to the state's revenue in a huge way. Till date, MFP and its significance on 'value addition' have not even been flagged as an economic issue in Jharkhand. For instance, products made after 'value addition' done to an MFP like tendu leaves is generating a heavy revenue to the state. If the same is done to other MFPs such as lac and *karanj*, it can transform the economic condition of forest dwellers in the state. Figures reveal that value addition done to horticulture, globally, is around 70 per cent but what has been done in India forms a mere 5 per cent. To cater to this small portion, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries has been constituted at the Centre but for forest produce none exists. In Jharkhand too, Mega Food Parks are being developed and only recently, foundation for an agriculture university has been laid at Barhi. This research suggests that the state needs a forest-centric research institute. Why cannot we have a Jharkhand Forest University on the lines of Birsa Agriculture University? Thereafter, the article talks about

how amendments need to be made in archaic forest laws making community forest rights more significant. It also shows how panchayats have a significant role to play in the protection of forests. Above all, the study depicts the way out as to how Jharkhand can be the epitome of forest-centric research in the country.

## Keywords

[Minor forest produce](#), [protected forest](#), [reserved forest](#), [value addition](#)

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