

Abstract

The aim of this study was to assess the utilization and socio-economic benefits of *Osyris lanceolata* (The East African Sandalwood) in Kitui County, Kenya. Data was collected using questionnaires and analysed using SPSS version 20. A total of 120 respondents were interviewed. The results revealed that 78% of the respondents were aware of existence of *O. lanceolata* plants in their region. From these respondents there were two main uses of *O. lanceolata* wood products which included; medicinal and perfumery oil production. The main purpose of harvesting *O. lanceolata* was mainly for commercial use (44.2%), with little use for domestic purposes (16.7%). The major beneficiaries of *O. lanceolata* business were the manufacturers reported by 45% of the respondents, followed by middlemen as reported by 30% of the respondents. The least beneficiaries were the harvesters from the wild and the transporters reported by 17.5% and 5.8% of the respondents respectively. Majority of the respondents (51.7%) reported that the main customers for *O. lanceolata* were the pharmaceutical companies followed by 29.2% who reported that it was perfume and cosmetic companies. There was significant Pearson correlation between socio-economic benefits ($r=0.781$, $P < 0.01$), usage knowledge ($r=0.744$, $P < 0.01$) and distribution ($r=0.666$ $P < 0.01$), with the harvesting trends of *O. lanceolata* from the wild. The study concluded that socio-economic benefits associated with *O. lanceolata* are contributing to its over-exploitation from the wild, thus calling for multifaceted interventions to minimize loss of this invaluable plant species from the wild.