

# REPORT ON THE MARKETING OF SANDALWOOD IN INDIA



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## PREFACE

Sandalwood has perhaps been the most precious perfumery material in the world from antiquity down to modern times and its popularity has shown no signs of depression. Medieval chronicles mentioned regular caravans passing over the deserts of Persia, Arabia and Asia Minor carrying Indian sandalwood to Egypt, Greece and Rome. India was known all over the civilised world as the home of sandalwood, its oil and *Attars*. Sandalwood has generally been associated with religious and festive occasions in the country.

A brochure on the marketing of sandalwood and its oil in India was brought out earlier in the year 1961. Since then, the production and trade of sandalwood have undergone a tremendous change. This prompted revision of the earlier brochure to highlight the changes that have taken place during the last 20 years. To bring all facts to light, a technique of survey by personal interviews, observations and utilisation of secondary data and information has been adopted to make the report up-to-date.

Amongst the various valuable forest products in India, the sandalwood is the highest price fetching wood and maximum foreign exchange earner. Upto the Second world war, India was exporting its sandalwood to different countries for its distillation. This war proved a blessing in disguise since it led to the installation of a factory in Mysore (Karnataka) for the distillation of sandalwood. Now there are two factories in public sector in Karnataka State besides a number of private factories in the country.

In the earlier days, India was producing round about 5 to 6 thousand tonnes of sandalwood and was meeting the world demand of sandalwood oil to the extent of 80—90 per cent. Unfortunately the annual production of sandalwood has dwindled to merely 2500 tonnes. Out of this, 400 to 500 tonnes of sandalwood is still exported to different countries and rest of the wood is utilised for distillation purposes by our indigenous distillation industries. The prominent sandal forests of Karnataka have passed through a disastrous situation due to spike disease, poor regeneration and lack of development work. The forest area itself has shrunk due to its utilisation for other purposes. Due attention for sandal trees has not been given. To meet the general demand, 300—400 trees are sacrificed at pre-



sent to have a tonne of sandalwood while 5 to 10 trees were sufficient to give the same quantity of wood in the past. Since this is a tree which requires nearly 40 years to give good quantity and quality of heartwood, it requires proper pre-planning so that the projected need after 50 years could be met for our future generation.

It is heartening to note that the State Governments have realised this drawback and have initiated the work of regeneration. An institute known as sandal Research Centre, Bangalore has been established in 1977 to conduct research into the various aspects of sandal tree and to guide the Govts. and Forest Departments to solve the problems arising from time to time. This centre has done a commendable job by developing a "Tissue Culture Technique" for the better and disease free growth of sandal trees. They have also chalked out a programme with short and long-term strategies to improve the supply of sandalwood in the coming years.

Much of the information contained in this report has been collected from trade, State Forest Departments and other official sources. Necessary help of published literature has also been taken to bring scattered information together and to make report more useful. Various authorities have rendered co-operation and assistance in providing valuable information to our field officers to whom our thanks are due. We, particularly, thank Shri V. Jayappa, the Director of Sandalwood Oil & Soap Detergent Limited, Mysore, Mrs. R. A. Srimathi, Senior Scientist, Sandal Research Centre, Bangalore and Shri K. R. Venkatesan, Conservator of Forests, Bangalore who were kind enough to furnish valuable information. We are also thankful to Dr. Nagarajan and his staff, Publication and Information Directorate Library, Pusa Institute Compound, New Delhi for library facilities.

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The Govt. of India should not be regarded as assuming responsibility for any of the findings/comments appearing in this report.

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