Russian forests offer a bounty of natural food and medicinal products. Both local villagers and wild animals depend on the mushrooms, berries, nuts, honey and medical plants that grow there.

This booklet describes how wise use of non-timber forest resources helps to protect the ‘home’ of the Siberian tiger and to promote sustainable forest management in Russia.

As a part of International Climate Initiative, the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) and KfW Development Bank sponsor collaborative projects by WWF Russia and WWF Germany that are implemented in the Russian Far East for the protection of Korean pine forests and Siberian tiger habitat.
The Siberian tiger is a rare endangered predator. It is the largest of five existing tiger subspecies and the only one that lives in snow.

Despite its might, this powerful animal is very vulnerable. One of the greatest threats to its survival is the degradation of coniferous-broadleaved forests, the ‘home’ of the tiger.

These forests play an essential role in preserving the unique biodiversity of the Sikhote-Alin Mountains and supporting its climatic and water regimes. Unfortunately, they are often subjected to degradative, unsustainable logging practices.

The 2005 inventory have shown that there are about 450 Siberian tigers left in the wild in the Russian Far East.
The most valuable areas of coniferous-broadleaved forests have been given a status of ‘nut harvesting zones’.

Such zones preserve the treasures of the Korean pine forests and are used for harvesting edible and medical plants and hunting fur-bearing animals.

Hunting and harvesting of non-timber forest products are often the only ways for the local villagers to make their living. Korean pine forests provide food for all their inhabitants, including wild boars and deer, which, in turn, are food for the tiger. That is why the Korean pine is also referred to as the ‘bread tree’.

Among the unique treasures of the Far Eastern taiga are pine nuts, edible ferns, actinidia berries (known as ‘wild kiwi’ or ‘kishmish’), wild grapes, magnolia-vine, forest lilac flowers, the medicinal roots of the eleuterococcus bush and hundreds of other plant species.
In the Russian Far East WWF’s partners take nut harvesting zones under lease for the purposes of harvesting of non-timber forest products.

Consequently, the lease holders are directly interested in the preservation of the ‘production trees’ and profiting not from logging but from the complex use of non-timber forest products.

In these zones sustainable use of these non-timber forest resources replaces production of wood. That is why this type of lease is informally called a conservation lease.

This type of forest management not only provides income for the leaseholders and local people but also preserves the forests and their treasures for future generations.
Funds earned from marketing of the non-timber forest products partly go to conservation measures in the leased forests, such as fire prevention and fighting illegal logging.

The new regulations imposed by the Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus introduced a ban on uncontrolled export of pine nuts. As a result, Russian producers can now compete for this resource, which used to flow to China in large quantitates.

Fair competition facilitates good management on the leased territories.
However, major improvements in legislation and law enforcement are needed to motivate responsible forest management in the field of non-timber forest products.

Balance between the economic, social and ecological interests of Russia will only be achieved if the government collaborates with business and local villagers as its primary partners for the use, conservation and augmentation of forest treasures.

WWF Russia believes that sustainable use of non-timber forest resources is an indispensable component of complex management of Russian forests.
You can support the conservation leaseholders and help protect the home of Siberian Tiger by using products labelled «From the Siberian Tiger».

“Now, when shop shelves are filling up with GMO foods, consumers are particularly interested in natural forest products. I am happy that while producing ecologically responsible products we help with nature conservation and the protection of rare Siberian tiger habitats.”

Alexey Karasypov, Director General, «PZB» Ltd., Kashkarovskaya NHZ leaseholder

“I often meet with forest dwellers – boars and bears – who, just like us, are fond of pine nuts. And where you find the boar, there you’ll find the tiger. People only take a small portion of all the forest products, leaving plenty for birds and animals.”

Oleg Yushkin, Chairman, Hunting and Fishing Community Organization «Sidatun», Melnichnaya NHZ leaseholder

“This logo guarantees that this product was produced by responsible businesses that contribute to the protection of Siberian Tiger habitat.

“Together with WWF experts I had a chance to visit some of the nut harvesting zones in the Russian Far East. I was amazed by the beauty of those places and the tracks and evidence of the many different species of animals that I’ve noticed in the area where Korean pine nut is harvested.”

Anton Fonin, Director General, «Cedar Forest» Ltd.

“It is very fulfilling to produce healthy goods that consumers can trust. There are just a few of us in this market, but what we do is really important.”

Vladimir Kudelko, Director General, Interregional Organization of Hunting and Fishing Communities «Krechet», Gassinskaya and Bolonskaya NHZs leaseholder

“WWF hopes to continue productive cooperation with all the stakeholders involved in the non-timber forest sector. This form of resource management is becoming especially important in the modern industrialized environment.”

Evgeny Lepyoshkin, Forest Program Coordinator, WWF Russia, Amur Branch
Far-Eastern pine nuts are healthy and nutrient rich. They contain almost all types of vitamins and minerals needed for a healthy lifestyle. They are especially valuable for their polyunsaturated fatty acids and lecitin.
Eleuterococcus is a close relative of ginseng. Having adaptogenic and restorative effect, it increases one’s efficiency, fatigue resistance, stimulates central nervous system, sharpens the mental process, eliminates tiredness and moderately raises arterial pressure.
Magnolia-vine is long known for its restorative properties. A few berries of this plant will help to prevent tiredness or recover after heavy activity. Magnolia-vine infusions are recommended for vitamin deficiency and during times of increased mental and nervous tension.
The chaga mushroom has antibacterial and antiseptic properties. Chaga infusions promote metabolism, boost mental processes, strengthen immunity, and stimulate central nervous, cardiovascular and respiratory systems. When used externally, chaga has anti-inflammatory, anaplerotic and analgesic effects.
Osmund fern is used in Russian, Korean and Japanese cuisine. It has a mushroom-like taste and fits well with salads and meat dishes. The indigenous people of Russian Far East – Udegei, Nanais – have a traditional method of preparing it by drying.
Bracken is used not only as food but as a traditional medicine. The young shoots of bracket can be pickled or fried.
Honey from Amur corktree is thick and wonderfully aromatic. It keeps its clear colour for a long time without getting granulated. This natural sweetener is invaluable for flu and bronchitis; it has anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. In traditional medicine the honey of this tree is used to heal tuberculosis.
Coniferous-broadleaved forests of the Russian Far East provide hundreds of types of non-timber products. Among other tasty and healthy goods «From the Siberian Tiger» are actinidia (‘wild kiwi’ or ‘kishmish’), lespedeza, Manchurian walnut, wild grape and apricot.

The forests of Siberia, the Urals, Caucasus and European regions of Russia, have vast reserves of edible and medical plants. Businesses have already started demonstrating the vast potential of non-timber exploitation of these forests.
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WWF is one of the largest independent international environmental organizations. It unites around five million supporters and works in more than 100 countries. The mission of WWF in the Russian Far East is to save the Amur leopard, Amur tiger and Oriental white stork from extinction, preserve precious forests and Amur wetlands.

Since 2008 WWF together with its partners supports legal, environmentally-friendly, socially responsible harvest of non-timber forest products through the mechanism of conservation leases. For example, in the Russian Far East it is nearly 700 000 ha of valuable forests, which provide optimal habitat for the tiger. This means that instead of cutting the trees, the leaseholders produce non-timber forest products, therefore providing the local villagers with income and protecting the forest from fires and illegal logging.

You can support the conservation leaseholders and help protect the home of Siberian Tiger by using products labelled «From the Siberian Tiger». This logo guarantees that this product was produced by a responsible business that contributes to protection of Siberian Tiger habitat.

The Federal Forest Agency supports sustainable forest management in the leased territories.