

Statement of the Problem

In northern Benin, several melliferous agroforestry plants with high medicinal and food values are used by local population. Due to ongoing destruction of their habitat caused by deforestation and agriculture, some of them are currently threatened. These species are currently experiencing a severe pressure because the practical schemes to implement their conservation and sustainable use have not been set. The present study aims to contribute to the long-term conservation of rare and threatened melliferous plants through the ethnobotanical investigation and farmer awareness.

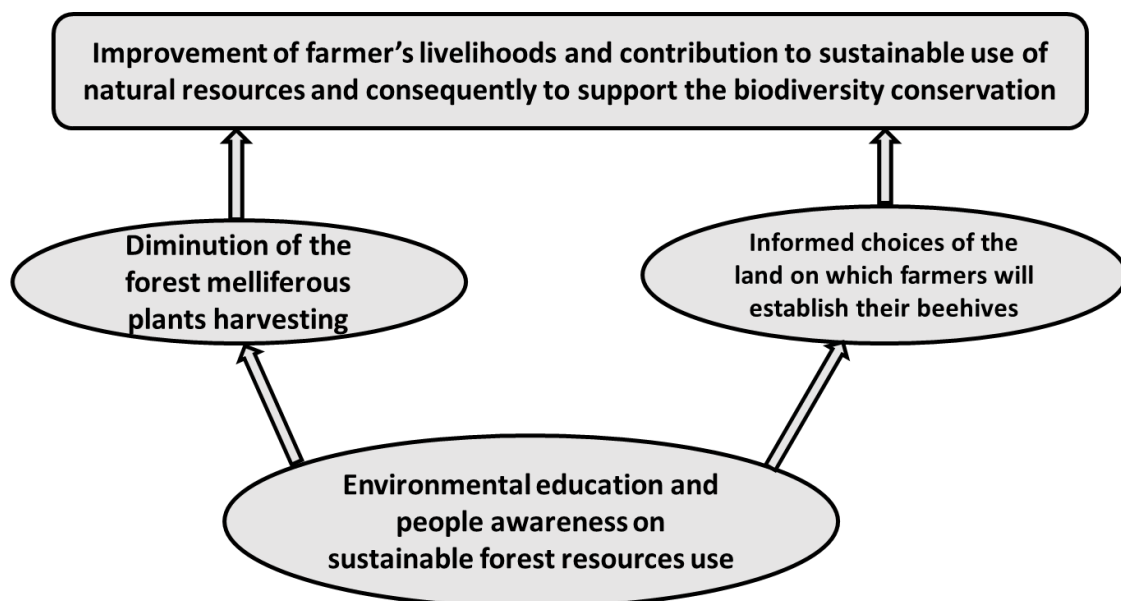


Figure : Therotical framework for the sustainable management of forest melliferous plants

Methodology

Individual interviews and focus groups surveys were carried out on 120 honey farmers using participatory approach in four districts in northern Benin. Topics on the use of melliferous plants with medicinal and food properties for honey production have been discussed with local communities and farmer associations. Honey farmers trainings have been realised on the opportunity to produce the therapeutic honey and their awareness about conservation and reinforce their participation in actions to support melliferous species sustainable use.



Figure 2: Individual survey realised at Banikoara; **Figure 3:** Focus group survey realised at Banikoara & **Figure 4:** Medicinal melliferous plant, *Acacia sieberina*

Findings

The main activities of the honey farmers are beekeeping, forest harvesting and agriculture. For the majority of farmers, the forest harvesting and beekeeping occupy them for 1 to 3 hours per day and the rest of the time for agriculture. Group surveys of farmers allowed to identify 16 constraints related to honey production and the management and conservation of forest melliferous plants. The first three major constraints are honey theft, the lack of beekeeping equipment and the lack of training. Globally, 46 melliferous plants species with high medicinal and food values were identified by honey farmers for their training.



Figure 5: Traditional beehive established on melliferous plants, *Ficus* sp.



Figure 6: Traditional wood-based beehive established on the melliferous plant *Anacardium occidentale*

Conclusion and Significance

Farmer knowledge on innovative cultural practices of honey production could improve their livelihoods and in the same time to contribute to sustainable use of natural resources and consequently to support the biodiversity conservation.