

We cannot fail to mention yet another important point. The main value of the Siberian pine taiga lies in the pine nut - a calorie-packed, biologically-active food product endowed with medicinal properties. The Siberian pine forests are the main producers of nuts in the country. They produce up to 80% of the biological harvest gleaned from all nut-producing trees. This natural potential, however, is being poorly exploited. Over the past two decades nut-harvesting operations have been reduced to a half or a third and account for an annual take of just 2,000 to 4,000 tonnes. This is only 1.5% of the possible industrial take.

Pine oil production is also poorly managed. This oil is tastier than many vegetable oils used in the preserved food industry, including olive oil which the state has to purchase abroad every year for hard currency. Our ancestors were much more assiduous. Industrial plants producing oil out of pine nuts were set up in Siberia in the difficult year of 1921. This industry, unfortunately, had to be shut down in 1941 because of the war and was never started up again.

There are many reasons behind the decline in nut harvesting operations. It is mainly the result of a lack of foresight in forest utilization strategy in the pine forests even though it is well known that the value of the product obtained from the pine in its live state is far greater than the value of its wood. Paradoxically, nut-harvesting has been transformed into a kind of by-product operation, and has an unenviable place in planning and management priorities. All the same, this harvest, as distinct from logging operations, is profitable even today. This profit, however, could be increased many times over if the harvesting operation were given the