



## Biodiversity: An Emerging Trend

More and more ads refer to the environment, to »green« products... Nature is now widely highlighted by consumer products brands – cosmetics are no exception. But products that come from nature raise questions about the source of natural ingredients and the preservation of plants and ecosystems... in other words: biodiversity.

But who today has heard of biodiversity? And what image do consumers have of the cosmetics industry relative to biodiversity conservation? These questions were addressed by a recent survey carried out by Ipsos Marketing for the Union for Ethical BioTrade, in February 2009, on the eve of the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, involving a sample population of 4000 individuals in 4 countries (France, Germany, the UK and the USA).

### Biodiversity:

#### Few experts, but strong potential

More than 1 out of 2 people (56%) say they have heard of biodiversity, and nearly one-third of those people can correctly define it. Why this disparity? Undoubtedly because biodiversity includes »bio«: a source of a certain amount of confusion with biological or organic food (notably in France). There is also confusion with sustainable development, an idea that is certainly linked to biodiversity but is larger in scope.

The French and British are more knowledgeable about biodiversity, even if it is still a minority (21% and 18% respectively). Germany – a forerunner in environmental protection – is where people are most likely to be able to more exactly define biodiversity. Americans were the least well informed. In any case, only a small percentage of people has accurate information in all of the countries surveyed.

#### Responsible consumers who try to learn more

The general public is highly aware of certain dimensions of natural products: this is the case with fair trade (92% say they have heard of it) and sustainable development (77%). But just as with biodiversity, awareness doesn't always imply

The Union for Ethical BioTrade is a non-profit association that promotes the 'Sourcing with Respect' of ingredients that come from native biodiversity. Members commit to gradually ensuring that their sourcing practices promote the conservation of biodiversity, respect traditional knowledge and assure the equitable sharing of benefits all along the supply chain.



understanding: fewer than 1 out of 2 individuals say they know exactly what sustainable development is, and the figure is 67% for fair trade. People are even less knowledgeable about concepts such as biodiversity conservation and ethical sourcing of the biodiversity. Purchasers of cosmetics and beauty products made from natural ingredients are more likely than average to say that they know about these concepts: buying »green« almost certainly implies having greater global awareness on environmental questions.

#### Cosmetics: A certain image deficit, a demand for information

Consumers appear to have a somewhat troubled image of cosmetics companies today in that only half of them trusts these companies and less than one third believes that this industry uses ethical practices when sourcing its natural ingredients. This apparent image deficit is not, however, synonymous with rejection: 85% of consumers would like to know more about how the cosmetics sector sources its natural ingredients.

This is a demand for proof in order to sanction the offenders: a large majority would be willing to stop buying products from cosmetics companies that are not materially committed to ethical sourcing of the biodiversity. The negative perception of the sector is thus linked more closely to a need for the industry to communicate more or more effectively about its ethical commitments.

Today, few consumers know what biodiversity is. The example of sustainable development, however, a concept that was

little known among the general public for many years, shows that communication efforts can bear fruit over time. Even though biodiversity remains known almost exclusively among early adopters, it is a trend that is certain to gain traction in coming years. The cosmetic sector, which already emphasizes the natural aspect of products, will have to give proof of its ethical biodiversity sourcing practices to address consumer expectations and inform the general public within the framework of this emerging trend.

#### The industry and the media,

#### communication relays that remain weak

How does the cosmetics industry communicate on this subject and how does the press relay messages linked to biodiversity? A Union for Ethical BioTrade tracking survey shows that only 44 of the world's largest cosmetics companies mention biodiversity in their public reports or on their websites and that only 9 talk about their ethical biodiversity sourcing practices. In addition, even though the press in France, Germany, the UK and the USA published some 22,000 articles covering biodiversity in general during 2008, only 33 of those articles linked biodiversity and the cosmetics industry (source: TNS/UEBT).

All of the results of this survey were presented by Ipsos and the Union for Ethical BioTrade on April in Munich during an international conference organized by the Union for Ethical BioTrade dedicated to the cosmetics industry: »The Beauty of Sourcing with Respect«. This international conference brought together, companies from the cosmetics sector, representatives from major organizations (UNCTAD, IUCN, and the CBD among others) and NGOs. The themes covered during the one-day conference concerned the major challenges faced by the cosmetics industry in terms of biodiversity, the ethical sourcing of natural ingredients and the status of negotiations on access and benefit sharing linked to biodiversity. For additional information about the tracking survey and the conference: [pr@ethicalbio trade.org](mailto:pr@ethicalbio trade.org) or visit the Union's website: [www.ethicalbio trade.org](http://www.ethicalbio trade.org).