

# Towards 'Sourcing with Respect': Engaging Private Industry to Promote Ethical Sourcing Practices

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Consumers today are increasingly demanding 'green' products. And as research, marketing reports and buyer surveys show, this call for ethical and sustainable goods is not a temporary market whim; it is an undoubtedly growing trend that is here to stay.

To gauge this mounting interest, and the awareness of biodiversity issues in the cosmetics sector in particular, in 2009 the Union for Ethical BioTrade commissioned a survey of 4,000 respondents – with telling results (Ethical BioTrade Barometer, 2009).

Of those questioned, 85 percent wanted to know more about sourcing practices in this industry, while 79 percent said they would stop buying a cosmetics and personal care brand if they knew that brand did not practice environmental sourcing or ethical trade.

The same study also revealed that 79 percent of respondents would have more faith in a cosmetics and personal care company whose commitment to ethical sourcing of biodiversity was verified by independent organisations. It is here that the Union for Ethical BioTrade is positioned. A non-profit, membership-based association, the Union promotes the 'Sourcing with Respect' of flora and fauna from native biodiversity; its mission is to encourage the sustainable use of ingredients that naturally occur in sourcing areas. By bringing in relevant private industry players, the Union for Ethical BioTrade seeks to advance the conservation of biodiversity, while ensuring that all

contributors along the supply chain, including small-scale producers, are paid fair prices and receive an equitable share of the benefits from the sale of the final products. The ethical sourcing of biodiversity recognises countries' sovereign rights over biodiversity and respects the rights of local and indigenous communities over their traditional knowledge.

Yet the Union for Ethical BioTrade acknowledges that implementing sound biodiversity practices along the supply chain can be challenging for smaller players. In addition, obtaining access to markets and receiving recognition for ethical practices may be difficult. This is why the Union was created: over time the grouping of like-minded companies will create a pool of supply and demand of ethical practices, while the verification system allows for effective differentiation of ethically sourced products in the market, and support measures help to facilitate implementation.

One such form of support measures that complements the Union's mission is the Ethical BioTrade Community Programme. Recently launched, this programme aims to promote the deeper engagement of local and indigenous communities in the ethical sourcing of biodiversity. The effective implementation of Ethical BioTrade principles will help to generate local income and ensure the sustainable use of biodiversity ingredients sourced from these communities. Through engaging institutions on the ground, the programme will work to

address problems commonly faced by biodiversity enterprises at the community level, such as limited infrastructure or lack of information on sustainable management of ingredients.

The programme works through the provision of Ethical BioTrade Community Grants, which are intended for small and medium-sized enterprises and cover costs related to the design and implementation of Ethical BioTrade practices. This includes, among other activities, scientific research focused on sustainability aspects of used species and their ecosystems; community consultation processes; knowledge development at the community level; and the establishment of monitoring and evaluation systems.

Through this and other initiatives, the Union for Ethical BioTrade is working to encourage enterprises to promote the 'Sourcing with Respect' of ingredients that come from native biodiversity. Markets are clearly poised to embrace this trend and consumer awareness is rising. But for industry to truly thrive in this market and capitalise on growing demand, such practices need support and independent recognition. It is here that the Union for Ethical BioTrade seeks to contribute.

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