

## “Supporting improved ABS practices in natural ingredients”

UEBT training and information exchange - Paris, 18 April

### Report

Evolving legal frameworks on access and benefit sharing (ABS) mean more companies working with natural ingredients seeking support on ethical practices for biodiversity-based research and development.

This training and information exchange, organized by the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) alongside its 2013 General Assembly, brought together UEBT affiliate members, as well as some trading members and partners, in order to:

- Share information on approaches and experiences in working with companies on ABS;
- Learn about new UEBT tools for assessing ABS in companies and supply chains; and
- Explore further collaboration on ABS.

Over 35 people participated in the workshop, which involved practical case studies and interactive discussions. In discussions, participants explored the challenges and opportunities for putting in practice ABS in different types of companies, as well as the specific policies and practices in which ABS could be assessed and improved.

Looking forward, participants highlighted UEBT tools such as the Ethical BioTrade Standard, ABS assessments and community-training materials were useful in supporting companies on ABS issues. Participants noted that further work on practical approaches to ABS, including training and dialogues at the local level and in collaboration with UEBT members, would be valuable.



*Rina Razanakolona, from Label CDB in Madagascar, holding up the Ethical BioTrade learning set.*

### New UEBT tools on ABS

- A **manual to assess benefit sharing** in natural ingredient supply chains (available in English and Spanish) outlines concepts and processes to evaluate and advance Ethical BioTrade requirements in different types of companies.
- A **learning set** describes a participatory method and includes graphic material to present Ethical BioTrade to producers and their communities. Large, illustrated sheets provide simple and practical information on issues such as negotiations, equitable prices and ABS.

*For more information on these tools, please contact the UEBT secretariat.*

## ABS scenarios in natural ingredients

During the workshop, participants identified and discussed the range of ABS issues that arise in various scenarios of work with natural ingredients. Groups were given hypothetical cases of companies sourcing, elaborating or developing biodiversity-based ingredients around the world, from community-based producers of traditional cereals in Africa and family-owned laboratories developing new essential oils in Mexico to a multinational beverage company launching a power drink based on plant extracts from South Pacific islands. Participants elaborated their cases and indicated ABS-related challenges faced in these situations, as well as considered how an ABS assessment process might identify and address gaps.



*Leandro Bin (Native, Brazil), Elizabeth Byaruhanga (IFC, South Africa), Suhel al-Janabi (ABS Initiative), Giovanni Giannatta (Corpei, Ecuador) and Andrea Urioste (FAN, Bolivia) discuss one of the scenarios. Groups highlighted improving traceability and prioritizing supply chains as first steps towards improved ABS practices.*

## ABS in company policies and practices

On the basis of the case studies and their own experiences, participants considered the link between ABS concepts and principles such as transparency, respect for customary rights and practices, prior informed consent and equitable sharing of benefits and the policies, procedures and practices developed and used by companies working with natural ingredients. For example, participants identified which ABS issues might be relevant in risk management strategies, contracts with suppliers, new product development protocols, and internal audits and reporting procedures.

## Next steps

In the closing of the workshop, participants shared their ideas on issues and approaches that it would be useful to discuss or develop further. There was emphasis on the merit of strengthening the exchange of information and collaboration among UEBT members, as well as of UEBT serving as a platform to engage with other stakeholders towards more practical and effective ABS systems. UEBT was asked to consider further work on training and facilitating discussions on ABS, particularly in collaboration with UEBT affiliate members.

## For more information

The Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) is a non-profit association that promotes the 'Sourcing with Respect' of ingredients that come from biodiversity. Companies that join UEBT 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. UEBT affiliate members are organizations working to support the promotion and implementation of Ethical BioTrade.

For more information on UEBT work on ABS, please see [www.ethicalbiotrade.org](http://www.ethicalbiotrade.org) or contact Maria Julia Oliva, Senior Coordinator for Policy and Technical Support, at [julia@ethicalbiotrade.org](mailto:julia@ethicalbiotrade.org).