

Empowering local producers and communities

Models and experiences in Ethical BioTrade



Role of producers in Ethical BioTrade

Local producers – collectors and farmers – play essential roles in the ethical sourcing of natural ingredients. They have a crucial part in ensuring that sourcing activities conserve and restore biodiversity, as well as advance local sustainable development. Producers also add value to natural ingredients, including through contributing practices, knowledge or stories that distinguish products in the market.

Ethical BioTrade recognises the importance of local producers. It requires companies to take measures to engage with producers in partnerships based on the exchange of information and the recognition of all contributions and rights. For example, local producers must have the opportunity to discuss and make decisions linked to sourcing activities, ensuring that these activities contribute to their goals and priorities. The Ethical BioTrade Standard requires negotiations with producers to be based on sharing adequate information and taking into account customary law and local practices.



Approaches to producer's organisational structure

Beyond their engagement with companies, another important issue is how producers organise themselves in a way that strengthens their role in the ethical sourcing of biodiversity. In Ethical BioTrade, there is no single model for the organisation of producers. The specific way in which producers work together will depend on their particular needs and interests, as well as on external factors such as the structure of demand and supply.

UEBT members work with producers organised in a range of different ways. Each case is unique, yet there are lessons to be learnt from reflecting on various models and their relevance. It is also useful to consider how companies can promote or support efforts of producers to improve their organisation and cooperation.



Cooperatives

Producers may collaborate through cooperatives. Cooperatives are legally recognised entities used to facilitate inclusive decision-making, empower producers in negotiations with their clients, provide training and technical support, and allow joint projects and investments. For example, Laboratoires Expanscience sources acacia seeds from Ben Nafa Kabo, a cooperative of women involved in various income-generating activities in Burkina Faso. Such partnership has allowed the implementation of several initiatives, including allowing the cooperative to secure organic certification and receive microloans to acquire land and build storage and office facilities.

In Latin America, Natura Cosmetics, for example, has prioritised producer cooperatives in sourcing natural ingredients for its Ekos product line. The work of Natura with cooperatives represents approximately 30 groups and 3000 families and is aimed at increasing the social benefits of natural ingredient supply chains. The company has helped suppliers to organise themselves in cooperatives and associations, through training and guidance on organisational and production aspects. Moreover, cooperatives must also reasonably represent the community through adequate mechanisms for accountability, member registration, transparent decision-making and organisational structure.

Producer associations

Farmer or collector associations are formal or informal groups, which bring together producers of particular plants or derived products. These groups are generally open to growers or collectors working on the same product in various communities. Producer associations seek to improve their integration in supply chains, through better articulating their interests and allowing more efficient production through cooperation in collection or cultivation, transportation, processing or trading activities.

For example, in Peru, Candela works together with the Indigenous Forestry Association in Madre de Dios (AFIMAD) in the collection and transformation of natural products, primarily Brazil nut. AFIMAD is an association bringing together representatives from eight communities of five groups of indigenous peoples, in order to promote equitable and sustainable exploitation of forest resources. In Moldova, Weleda

Empowering local producers

As part of their commitment to Ethical BioTrade, UEBT members support local producers in their efforts to improve local coordination and collaboration. Collectors and farmers decide the specific structure in which they organise themselves and the extent of their collaboration on the basis of their particular needs and circumstances. Nevertheless, in designing and implementing their sourcing activities, companies may contribute to empowering their local partners and advancing their own local collaboration.

Moreover, companies can work closely with local producers to facilitate information and consideration of different options for collaboration, as well as support local groups in implementing selected projects. For example, in Ghana, Savannah Fruits Company works in close partnership with cooperatives of women for the sourcing of shea nut, paying premium prices and providing training, organisational support and funds for education and biodiversity conservation. By providing training and transference of technology, Beraca encourages producers in the Brazilian Amazon to organise themselves. Beraca also has an annual event where producer group representatives meet, receive training and exchange experiences on ethical sourcing issues. Also in Brazil, Centroflora has a partnership programme that seeks to integrate its suppliers into natural ingredient value chains. Technical guidance is provided to improve production practices and premiums are paid to be invested in projects for local development.



works with local partners on the cultivation of organic lavender. Lavender is an integral part of the income of a group of 200 farmers, allowing significant economic and social stimuli for the surrounding communities.

Community-based organisations

Community-based organisations are groups or associations organised at the village level. These organisations aim to strengthen and articulate their members' voices. Their focus is generally to protect the rights and interests of communities, as well as to secure the information, training or technical support required to enhance productivity, increase local value addition, and advance local sustainable development goals.

For example, in Zimbabwe, KAITE works with local producers, primarily women, on the basis of their commitments to sustainable practices and local development. These small-scale farmers work together through community-based organisations to engage in negotiations and training programmes with KAITE. In Madagascar, Aroma Forest and Man and the Environment work with community associations that structure the local population active in the production of essential oils. These associations are working to improve their organisation and technical skills to assume full control of essential oil production. In Malawi, TreeCrops works closely with collector associations in its sourcing of natural ingredients. Such collaboration is also the basis for a system for fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from the use of biodiversity and associated traditional knowledge.

Community enterprises

Community enterprises are collectively-owned businesses, which belong to and benefit the local community. These enterprises aim to improve the integration of local producers in the supply chain and enhance local value addition. Furthermore, they seek to ensure that sourcing activities respond to local priorities and advance community goals. Community enterprises may focus, for example, on training and employment of community members or local reinvestment and technology transfer.

For example, UEBT member Madre Tierra Amazonía is a community enterprise based in Bolivia. The owners of Madre Tierra Amazonía include local associations that represent most local producers working with the company, allowing increased engagement in the transformation and commercialisation of forestry products coming from their lands. In Colombia, Ecoflora works with Bosque Húmedo Biodiverso, a community enterprise bringing together producers, local authorities and local investors and coordinating local production dynamics with commercial partners. In this structure, producers have preferential shares and the right to 35% of profits of Bosque Húmedo Biodiverso. Swazi Indigenous Products (SIP) is a natural seed oil enterprise in Swaziland, fully owned by the rural women harvesting the fruits. This model entitles suppliers to a share in SIP profits and the right to elect and participate in the Board of Directors, in which five out of the nine people must be community representatives.



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