



Access and benefit sharing: Exchange of views and experiences

During the second day of the 2018 “Beauty of Sourcing with Respect” conference, the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) organised, with the support of the ABS Capacity Development Initiative, an exchange of views and experiences on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their utilisation (ABS). The exchange brought together international organisations, civil society and companies committed to sourcing natural ingredients with respect for people and

biodiversity, with the aim of sharing perspectives and lessons learnt.

Suhel al-Janabi (ABS Capacity Development Initiative) opened the exchange by noting the success of the first day of the conference and inviting participants to now dive into the topic of ABS. He introduced the objectives of the ABS Capacity Development Initiative, calling for more sharing of information and strengthening trust among stakeholders for better partnerships on ABS.



The “Beauty of Sourcing with Respect” conference Paris, 19-20 May 2018

This annual conference is organised by the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) along with strategic partners. It is a leading international platform for exchange on the ethical sourcing of biodiversity. In 2018, which marked ten years since its launch, the conference attracted more than 270 participants, including representatives from sourcing, sustainability and R&D departments in companies in the food, cosmetics and natural pharmaceutical sectors. Participants also included policy makers and representatives from civil society, and international from Africa, Europe and Latin America.

Participants in the ABS exchange responded to this call, actively contributing to discussions, and highlighted the open and constructive approach of the dialogue. This report summarises key points raised during different sessions.

ABS and its contribution to sustainable development goals

Valerie Normand (CBD Secretariat) provided an overview of progress on the Nagoya Protocol since its adoption in 2010. She highlighted the increasing number of ABS measures and institutional arrangements at national levels and the engagement of actors in tools such as the ABS Clearing House, which most participants confirmed they consult regularly.

Natalie Feltman (Department of Environmental Affairs - South Africa) then linked progress on ABS implementation to advancing the sustainable development goals (SDGs). She offered examples of how initiatives in South Africa are promoting the bioeconomy and improving livelihoods among indigenous peoples and local communities.

In discussions, participants raised concerns on the persisting uncertainty around ABS requirements, especially in countries in the process of adopting or revising their laws and regulations. Panellists agreed on the need for clearer and more comprehensive information and transboundary cooperation among countries in order to increase legal certainty and transparency. The panel also suggested that SDGs could be a way to find win-win solutions and promote trust.

Updates on ABS laws and regulations

This session offered participants the latest information on ABS rules and practices in four key countries for natural ingredients: India, Madagascar, Viet Nam and China.

T. Rabikumar (India National Biodiversity



Authority) detailed the steps of the application procedures for access to biological resources in India. He highlighted that application procedures may now be completed online and there are clear guidelines for benefit sharing.

Lolona Ramamonjisoa (ABS National Focal Point - Madagascar) and Cuc Nguyen (Biodiversity Conservation Agency, Viet Nam) introduced new rules on ABS in their countries. These new rules have similarities, such as clearly excluding sourcing of natural ingredients for existing products from the scope of ABS and involving several stakeholders in the negotiation of prior informed consent and mutually agreed terms.

Finally, Prof. Xue Dayuan (Minzu University of China) introduced the ABS legal framework in China. He noted that several laws and policies include provisions on ABS, but only recently is the process underway to develop a comprehensive ABS legal instrument.

Presentations sparked great interest from participants, which posed a number of questions, particularly on the topic of scope of ABS requirements. For example, there were questions about how broad the terms “genetic resources” and “traditional knowledge” were interpreted and how the term “research and development” is defined and understood. There was also discussion among participants on the trends for fair and equitable benefit sharing, which remains subject to mutually agreed terms in most legal frameworks though rules more and more define certain parameters for the negotiation.

Trends in R&D and implications for ABS

Lydia Genthon (Plant Advanced Technologies) opened the session by introducing the PAT Plant Milking® technology. Lydia highlighted that this technology allowed exploring and exploiting phytochemical profiles of botanical species without any negative impact on existing populations. Nevertheless, throughout the session, participants raised questions about potentially negative impacts for existing supply

chains and livelihoods linked to natural ingredients.

Alex Saunois (Sederma) explained how the company approaches biotechnology in line with not only its business objectives but also social, environmental and economic considerations. He expressed confidence that biotechnology would be an increasingly interesting tool in this regard, which suggested a future of sourcing eco-responsible ingredients.

Sébastien Duprat de Paule (SEPPIC) discussed marine biotechnology techniques used by the company, highlighting environmental-friendly principles that oversee the technology, such as limited harvest and controlled pollution.

Participants showed interest in understanding the practical ways in which these technologies disrupt the way companies prospect and develop new inputs and ingredients from biodiversity - and the implications for a meaningful implementation of the Nagoya Protocol. There was considerable concern of whether indeed biotechnology would contribute to in-situ conservation and allow the engagement of local stakeholders.



Negotiations on ABS

Lourdes Mayordomo (Provital) shared lessons from securing an ABS permit, later published as an internationally recognised certification of compliance, in Mexico. The key message in the presentation was the importance of communication and understanding between business and local actors, including local universities, experts and communities, for successful ABS negotiations. Only through such an approach can a mutual beneficial relationship be built, which also fosters trust and long-term cooperation.

In panel discussions and open questions and answers, the consensus among participants is that a lot of work is required from various stakeholders to make ABS negotiations work, both at international and national levels. Participants shared advice, including involving local lawyers and collaborating with projects involving international or non-governmental organisations.



The ABS Exchange was organised by UEBT with the support of the ABS Capacity Development Initiative. UEBT and the ABS Capacity Development Initiative collaborate on activities that provide governments, companies and other stakeholders with technical and practical expertise on putting in practice legal and ethical requirements on access and benefit sharing in Africa.



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Ethical sourcing

Exchange of views and experiences

During the second day of the 2018 “Beauty of Sourcing with Respect” conference, the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) organised, with the support of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) BioTrade Initiative, an exchange of views and experiences on the ethical sourcing of biodiversity. The exchange brought together international organisations, civil society and companies committed to sourcing natural ingredients with respect for people and biodiversity, with the aim of sharing perspectives and lessons learnt.

In her opening remarks, Lorena Jaramillo (UNCTAD BioTrade Initiative) highlighted the value of the BioTrade network in advancing good practices, documenting lessons learned and addressing emerging issues. In this context, the exchange was seen as an additional step in reaching out to partners and practitioners to promote, document, disseminate and measure the impact and contribution of BioTrade to sustainable development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Aichi Targets.



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Participants in the UEBT-UNCTAD BioTrade Initiative Ethical Sourcing exchange actively contributed to plenary and group exercises, and highlighted the open and constructive approach of discussions. This report summarises key points raised during different sessions and exchanges.

Certifying credible company programs: Solution for upscaling?

Based on presentations by Annette Piperidis (Weleda) and Joao Teixeira (Natura Cosmetics), this session considered the strengths and weaknesses of certifying company programs as a solution for scaling up practices for the ethical sourcing of biodiversity. Weleda and Natura Cosmetics are both UEBT members and launching partners in the new UEBT label for Ethical Sourcing Systems.

Advantages of certification approaches noted by participants in this context include encouraging continuous improvement and facilitate the uptake by new companies. It is also a way to keep consumers informed and build a relationship of trust. Disadvantages pointed out by participants include that certification is often more complex and costly for small companies. Concern was also expressed that - given significant difference among supply chains for natural ingredients - it may be difficult to have a certification system that proves sufficiently flexible. A key take-away point from discussions was the need to work together along supply chains to coordinate and enhance positive impacts at local level and find win-win solutions.

Enhancing biodiversity conservation and restoration in supply chains

This session featured three experiences in how ethical sourcing of biodiversity contributes not only to the conservation but also to the restoration of biodiversity. Laura Fox (Fauna & Flora International) spoke of the dramatic decline



in pollinators and its impact on supply chains of natural ingredients. Studies conducted show that one-third of 15 high-value pollinating crops, apples for example, depends largely on wild pollinators. Practices along supply chains, including the introduction of buffering zones in intensive agriculture and the reduction of pesticide use, can address some of the drivers of the decline in pollinators. Yet, she noted, to date, few certification schemes require measures linked to benefiting pollinators.

Felipe Fuentelsaz (WWF Spain) emphasised the importance of looking at biodiversity conservation not only in protected areas, but in all human activities. He described WWF Spain projects in high-value natural systems such as olive groves. Lessons learnt point to how much could be achieved if companies include biodiversity in their sourcing criteria and standards improve biodiversity requirements and indicators.

Finally, Tobias Ludes (Global Nature Fund) and Simona D'Amico (UEBT) presented findings of their collaboration on promoting biodiversity in agricultural production through Guidelines for Biodiversity Action Plans. This tool aims to reduce negative impacts and create conditions benefiting biodiversity. It was developed based on analysis of over fifty existing standards, as well as fields studies in countries such as Kosovo, where there was a baseline assessment, a goal-setting process, implementation of measures and monitoring and evaluation.

Discussions, once again, highlighted the importance of working together with producers and local organisations, but also acknowledged the challenge of the costs involved, including in terms of time and human resources.

Engaging smallholders in Ethical BioTrade supply chains

Christina Archer (Sustainable Food Lab) and Andrew Wilson (Helvetas Regional BioTrade Project South East Asia) shared white experiences in ensuring smallholders and other local actors actively engage in Ethical BioTrade.

Christina focused on the concept of “living income,” its usefulness in looking at equity along supply chains, and the difficulties of defining and measuring it. Participants worried “living income” is a concept both too broad (because of its several aspects, including link to food, health and education needs) and too restrictive (because it focuses on price as a point of intervention).

Andrew pointed out some key considerations for working with smallholders, including understanding the actual challenges in the supply chains, developing pilot projects to find solutions, working with partners willing to innovate, and learning from those experiences to scale up. Participants agreed on the need for companies to be flexible in looking at different solutions in different contexts, and open to understand local partners and their needs.

Joint actions to address supply chain challenges

The last session looked at the Initiative for Responsible Carnauba as an example of how companies can work together to address ethical sourcing challenges.



The Initiative for Responsible Carnauba, coordinated jointly by UEBT and GIZ - is supporting suppliers to improve conditions in the Carnauba wax sourcing areas, as well as finding new approaches to the many social and environmental challenges in the associated industry. Louisa Losing (GIZ) explained some of the challenges linked to sourcing Carnauba wax and how any effective improvement depended on bring together buyers and processors. Lara Pontes (Pontes Industria de Cera) noted that “there won’t be a place in the future for businesses that don’t take care of their people and environment,” in explaining why the company, a leading Carnauba wax manufacturer, is engaging in this initiative.

In line with earlier discussions, participants considered collaboration and sector-wide approaches to be essential in ethical sourcing of biodiversity. Collective action has proven possible and useful in Carnauba and other cases, when it is purpose-driven, focused on real problems along the supply chain and brings together all key players, including competitors.



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