

the BioTrade Stakeholder Forum's journey

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20th BioTrade Stakeholders' Forum Meeting

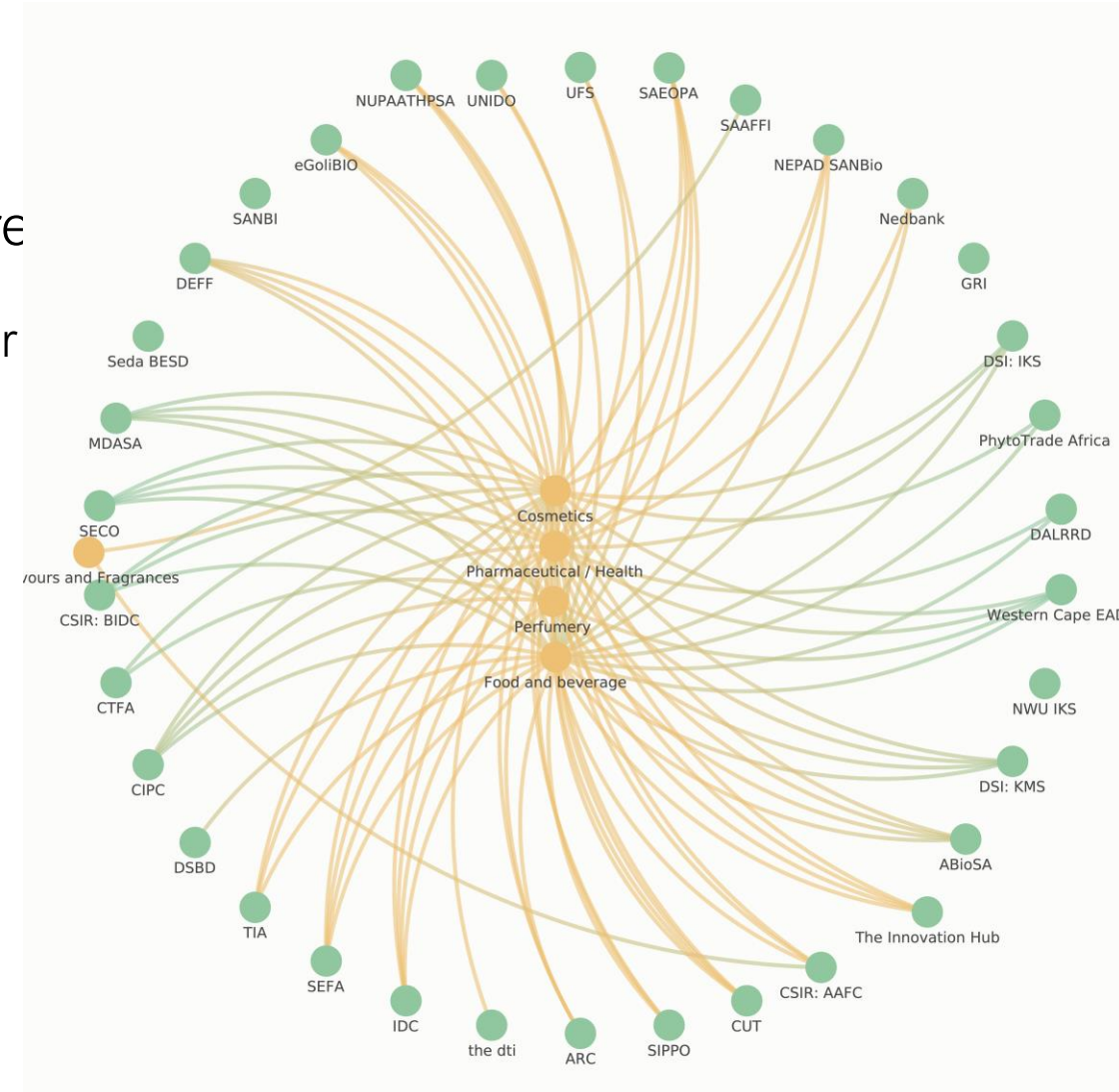
Looking back to the BioTrade Forum

- Towards the end of 2019, the organisations and functions in the biotrade forum network were mapped (7th, 8th and 9th meetings)
- After February 2020, the BioTrade stakeholder's forum moved online
 - Online events meant more people could participate
 - The information sharing was increased
 - Ideas spread quickly through the community
- Today is the 20th Forum!

Rewinding to the 9th Forum in February 2020

We made recommendations on how to improve the resilience of the BioTrade Forum network by:

- Making the offerings of member organisations more explicit:
 - An exact description of the service offering to the sector
 - Description of unique capabilities or special resources
 - What must users/beneficiaries have in place (service preconditions)
 - Who can you not help? (Limits of the service offering)
 - What does the service cost?
- Making networks more visible – who do you work with?
- Which species, regions, value chain links or companies do you prioritise?



In the meantime, a lot has happened...



What can be done to strengthen a network

- Networks are not only defined by stable and prominent ties; they are also strengthened by “weak” ties.
 - Weak ties are knowing a name, remembering a face or a fact about somebody somewhere in the system
 - The value of these connections may not be apparent immediately
- Knowing these distant ties offers resilience when there is a sudden change

How to strengthen weak ties:

- Create opportunities to meet people they won't otherwise cross paths with
- Foster the formation of focused interest groups provided that:
 - The topics don't align directly with organisational or policy objectives
 - Discovered contributions or solutions can be shared back into the larger network

What's in a name?

- In a **forum**, the people designing the agenda and selecting the venue set the agenda
- In a **network**, people work interdependently with others to explore synergies or to address what is important to them and to the larger network
- However, it is still necessary to maintain a coherent identity or common ground for different people to relate with other
- It is not necessary to choose between a forum and a network....the BioTrade Forum probably have networks within and around it.

How to nurture the resilience of the network?

- Develop a broad intent that allows differences to be overcome for a higher purpose
- Frame or reframe problems or issues detected by the community in novel ways
 - Avoid topics or themes that perfectly align with policies, strategies or mandates
 - Intentionally craft novel combinations of themes or topics
- Reduce the risks/costs for any member to host events
 - like a meet-up, deep-dive, or “show-and-tell.”
- Make it easy for people to share observations, progress or concerns as they arise
- Make sure that “newcomers” are onboarded quickly
- Be creative about how members' unique capabilities/insights can be used to strengthen the network
- Challenge conventions or approaches that are not delivering the expected results – encourage people to search and try alternative approaches
- Recognise the efforts of champions weaving or strengthening the network

Suggestions to strengthen the BioTrade Forum network from the community

Question I often ask the networks I work with

- What can individuals or organisations contribute?
- How easy is finding or connecting with somebody you don't know?
- Do people know what you are passionate or curious about?
- Which strengths or capabilities of members are still unknown in this community?
- Which topics could induce some to work together in novel arrangements?
- Which of our current arrangements and rituals should we maintain or protect?
- If explored, which topics, alternative approaches or challenges could unleash new energy and excitement?

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