

## **Draft minutes of the 20<sup>th</sup> Biotrade Stakeholders Forum meeting held virtually on 24 October 2023**

### **1. Virtual Arrival**

### **2. Welcome and Purpose of meeting**

The Chairperson welcomed the participants.

The purpose of the meeting was to receive feedback and a report on the African Biotrade Festival which was held in September 2023 and for Dr. Shawn Cunningham, Mesopartner, to share reflections on the journey of the Biotrade Stakeholders' Forum. Members will be given an opportunity to share their thoughts on what else could be done to further strengthen the biotrade network.

The draft agenda was adopted with no changes. Proposed by: Anna Reynecke and Seconded by Karen Swanepoel.

### **3. Minutes of the 19<sup>th</sup> Biotrade Stakeholder Forum meeting held on the 20 June 2023**

The minutes of the 19<sup>th</sup> Biotrade Stakeholder Forum Meeting were presented and no changes were recorded.

### **4. Matters Arising**

None.

### **5. Presentations by ABioSA**

Serole Mketsu and Adrie El Mohamadi from ABioSA presented the report on the African Biotrade Festival (ABF). The following is a summary of the main points of the presentation.

- The African Biotrade Festival was held on the 14-16 September 2023 at the Sandton Convention Centre in collaboration with the Organic & Natural Products Expo Africa 2023.
- The purpose of the festival was to showcase the growth and market potential of indigenous ingredients and products and host discussions about the biotrade sector challenges and opportunities with an emphasis on market access, building business support networks and linkages within the biotrade ecosystem.
- The festival was targeted at investors, researchers, policy makers, buyers & innovators from the food, fragrance, flavours, ingredients & cosmetics sectors to meet biotrade producers, suppliers and communities, and learn how the sector is addressing quality, market access, regulatory compliance and global competitiveness.
- The ABF was hosted by the Department of Environment, Forestry & Fisheries (DFFE) and Department of Trade, Industry & Competition (**the dtic**) supported by the ABioSA (funded by SECO) and BIA (BMZ funded) projects with various technical support from various stakeholders (UNIDO:GQSP, SAEOPA, SIPPO, SSAIP, GEF6, UBET, SANBI, Buchu Association, ABA, SAHTA, ABS initiative, BioPANZA).
- Some highlights from the event included:
  - ✓ A 2-day conference with various technical partners was involved
  - ✓ Student competitive session to see how to bring young people to the sector

and support them. Three (3) students will be further supported to attend their choice of an international conference to showcase their research.

- ✓ Buchu sector: historic signing of an Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) agreement between the Buchu Association, the SA government represented by DFFE, the National Khoi Council and the South African San Council
- ✓ Honeybush & rooibos tea tasting area hosted by DFFE & the ARC
- ✓ Friends of Biotrade was born as an aspiration for inclusive community building initiative across sectors active in biodiversity
- ✓ Positive and encouraging feedback from exhibitors, participants, EU participants and buyers (quotes can be found in the attached presentation)
- ✓ Survey of 44 SMME, 3 associations and government stakeholders



### Lessons Learnt

Dedicated ABF logo, branding and marketing of the event outside of the partners identities ensures a greater chance for sustainability.	Bring the festive element in, through a cultural corner, music, kids' zone & more food stalls.
Collaboration between 2 government departments with funders and other technical partners were seen as very positive.	Extend the collaboration to other government departments such as DSI, Depts of small business development, traditional affairs etc.
The exhibition and conference integration was appreciated.	Conference and workshops parallel sessions, with networking opportunities in between.
Value by SMMEs to the extent that they will be willing to pay/partly pay at the next festival.	Bring more African countries on board with specific country pavilions.
The collaboration with O&N ensured that the event was substantial for the visitors.	Attract more international buyers – EU, USA, Asia etc.
The ABF is a milestone in the journey not the destination.	Bring big corporates, especially those in retail space on board from the start (DisChem, Clicks Woolworths, Foodlovers, Spar, etc.).

The second ABF is scheduled for 12-14 September 2024, Sandton Convention Centre in collaboration with Organic & Natural Expo 2024. The Biotrade Stakeholders were invited to collaborate in the event as financial or technical partners.

A video on the ABF was screened.

Some observations and suggestions shared by members after the presentation include:

- It would be helpful to have a marketing package to take along to international trade fairs to start promoting the 2024 festival well in advance;
- Set up investor meetings and buyer missions around the same time as the festival in

September 2024;

- The festival should be seen as a milestone in a journey within the sector and not a destination but lots of activities happening before, in parallel and after, including site visits, which could be organized by the associations; and
- Diversify technical and financial partners so that the SA biotrade industry can be expanded and showcased even more.

## 6. Presentation by Dr. Shawn Cunningham, Mesopartner: Reflections on the journey of the Biotrade Stakeholders' Forum

Dr. Shawn Cunningham, Mesopartner presented “the Biotrade Stakeholders Forum’s journey”

The following is a summary of the main points of the presentation:

- Recalled how the organizations and functions in the meso-level organizations supporting the biotrade sector were mapped in the earlier meetings of the biotrade stakeholders’ forum;

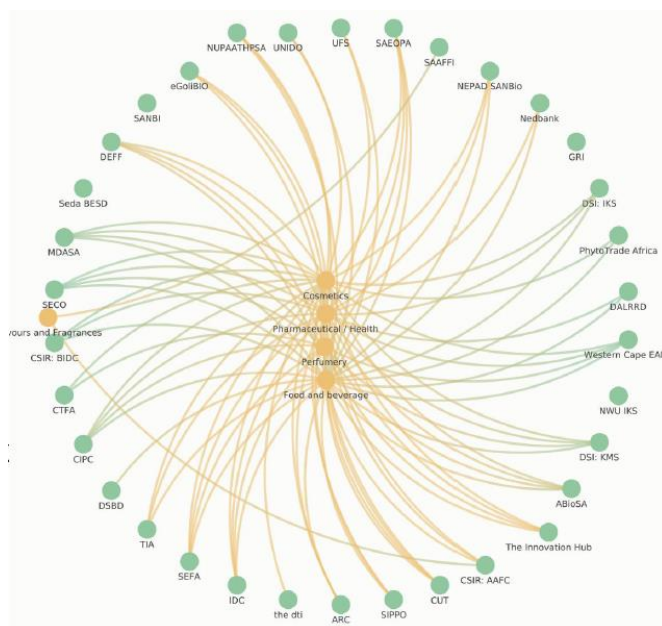


Image: “Rewinding to the 9<sup>th</sup> Forum in February 2020”

- Noted how after February 2020, the biotrade stakeholder’s forum moved online due to the COVID pandemic and this meant that more people could participate, the information sharing was increased and ideas spread more quickly through the sector;
- Suggested that there could be smaller networks within this network or how can we create small physical events or occasions where people that are interested in an issue or they’re interested in a specific topic can get to connect;
- Ideas budding from a smaller group can go back into the bigger network for feedback and further developing the idea;
- Forum versus network: emphasized that the strength of the network is often determined by the individuals in the network;

- While continuing to host the forum, it was suggested to also encourage smaller groups of people to come together to talk to each other to find new common interests and promote networking activities around the forum;
- Nurturing resilience: Resilience means that when a new opportunity comes up or maybe a new disaster strikes us, that we can reconfigure and we can continue, and
- Highlighted the importance of recognizing efforts of champions weaving or strengthening the network.

Some points shared to include in 2024:

- SAEOPA suggested further engagement with Indigenous Plant Use Forum (IPUF) and the International Federation of Essential Oil Trade (IFEAT) Platform to get a sense of the demand and new trends in the sector;
- The Biotrade Forum could bring all these players together, from the communities to the people in the production process, research, trade and government; and
- SIPPO noted that they will have further discussions on how to further build on to the interventions of this year in the preparations for next year's festival as well as the on-site participation.

## 7. Closure

The Chairperson shared the good news on how the National Metrology Institute of South Africa (NMISA) have become accredited for the testing of essential oils for the full suite of physical and chemical tests in order to demonstrate the quality profile of an oil. A television interview with NMISA can be viewed on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZjebIqO1iAn>

The final video of this year's African Biotrade Festival will be shared by ABioSA once complete.

Stakeholders were encouraged to submit topics for discussion or offer to present on their programmes to the 2 coordinating projects (ABioSA and GQSP-SA) for the next BioTrade Stakeholders' Forum meeting scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2024. The 21st meeting will be chaired by ABioSA.

**Appendix 1: African Biotrade Festival presentation**

**Appendix 2: Dr. Shawn Cunningham, Mesopartner presentation "the Biotrade Stakeholders Forum's journey"**

