



# SUMMARY REPORT

September 2023



## A sustainable success

The first African Biotrade Festival (ABF) - supported by the Swiss, German and South African governments - was a great strategic and commercial success. Feedback from the biotrade sector, government and small businesses has been overwhelmingly positive and there is broad support for the event to be sustained and expanded.

The ABF featured six pavilions dedicated to high-potential biotrade species and their sector organisations, and one specialist pavilion to showcase biotrade research, testing and standards. The species on show included Baobab, Marula, Buchu, Sceletium, Honeybush and various indigenous species used for essential and vegetable oils.



The Buchu sector pavilion was popular with African Biotrade Festival visitors interested in learning about a high-value indigenous plant species

Also on show were more than thirty small businesses supported by the ABF funders, which joined 100 other Organic & Natural Products Expo Africa exhibitors, promoting their indigenous plant-based products and ingredients. Exhibitors and delegates represented countries including Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Cameroon, Madagascar and Côte D'Ivoire.

Held in Johannesburg from 14 to 16 September 2023, in partnership with the 2nd Organic & Natural Products Expo Africa (O&N), the festival attracted more than 4,000 visitors including 550 dedicated registrations for the ABF.



Thirty small businesses were supported to attend the African Biotrade Festival to display their ingredients and products and meet new potential customers and consumers

The African Biotrade Festival was organised by the ABioSA and BioInnovation Africa projects in partnership with the SA Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dtic). ABioSA is funded by SECO and implemented by GIZ; and BIA is funded by the German government through the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Technical partners for the event included SIPPO, SSAIP, UNIDO GQSP, SANBI, GEF-6 and BioPANZA. Other key collaborators included the African Baobab Alliance, Buchu Association, SA Honeybush Tea Association, Southern African Botanical Products Association, Medical Research Council and the Southern African Essential Oils Producers Association.

Among many highlights at the event was the 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.



A landmark agreement was signed between the SA government, Buchu Association, the National Khoi Council and South African San Council

A dynamic two-day ABF conference programme included a government session to showcase the enabling environment for the biotrade, and an industry session to discuss industry's role and needs in a flourishing sector. There were talks on intellectual property, case studies about the Baobab and Marula sectors, and a discussion about equitable community involvement in the Honeybush sector.



Six students were given the opportunity to present their research, which included health and medical benefits of biotrade species, modelling of efficient oil extraction, environmental sustainability and community cultivation methods.



Six students made excellent presentations about relevant and high-impact research, with three selected to attend an international conference of their choice

Also at the festival was a popular tasting experience featuring indigenous Honeybush and Rooibos teas. Biotrade producers and manufacturers have traditionally had to travel at great expense to international trade shows to showcase their products; but the African Biotrade Festival has now established itself as a powerful domestic event which contributes to an economically sustainable and equitable biotrade sector.



The Honeybush community was well represented at the festival, with a dedicated pavilion and a number of small business stands



# Testimonials

*The African Biotrade Festival was a really important event for the emerging Buchu sector, helping our producers to profile their high-value ingredients and products to local and international buyers, as well as the wider public.*

*One of our strategic aims is to expand awareness of Buchu and its social and economic impact as a biotrade species. This is what the festival enabled. It was also very valuable to meet the wider biotrade community and learn in person from people running sector associations for other species.*

*The festival enabled networking, identification of mutual interests and created opportunities for the Buchu Association to collaborate with other organisations and sectors. This should be an annual event and we look forward to supporting its development.*

**Paul Hartwig**  
Buchu Association chairman



*This first African Biotrade Festival exceeded my expectations. Having been to many local and international trade shows I think we have a pioneering new event that looks professional, brings divergent stakeholders together, and showcases the biotrade sector and its potential. We possibly have a new event around which local, national and international buyers and investors could set their schedules. This will have a significant impact on the African biotrade sector, enhancing its ability to protect biodiversity and create jobs and economic opportunities by accessing new markets with a sustainable supply of indigenous plant-based products and ingredients.*

**Cyril Lombard**  
Founder director: Biotrade Ventures  
Former chief executive of PhytoTrade Africa



*The Southern African Botanical Products Association (SABPA) was invited to have a stall at the ABF as part of the sector development plan for Sceletium. This botanical raw material and its commercial applications are relatively new to the market but are gathering momentum fast. The focus is to broaden market access, implement quality and analytical standards and obtain legally compliant access to the US market.*

*The ABF has been a very important event for the SABPA to gauge knowledge of the public about and acceptance of Sceletium products. The insights, enquiries for trade of the products exhibited and the general feedback were invaluable to inform and shape our strategy going forward. It has built confidence that our efforts are in the right direction and will bear fruit in the near future.*

*Furthermore, the opportunities to exchange experiences with other sector development players has added fundamentally to the overall positive outcome for the SABPA.*

*The ABioSA team under the very capable leadership of Adrie El Mohamadi needs to be congratulated for having put a first-class trade show together. Conceptualisation, preparation, stalls, logistics, layout and design, and the support to the sector and individual SMMEs was outstanding and much appreciated! We are immensely thankful to all the sponsors! The overall design of the workshops and lectures was well received and much learning was had.*

*It is the firm opinion of the industry that the African Biotrade Festival must continue going forward. Most of the more developed and established companies are willing to support themselves going forward and will not be as dependent on financial support as the smaller SMMEs.*

*In addition, feedback received from associated companies that had their own booths equally reported a good uptake and resonance for their products.*

*In terms of tradeshows for the natural, organic, finished product or ingredient sectors, we need to keep in mind that there are no specific shows in this country so far for each category. It will therefore always be a mix of the above – which is an advantage as it attracts a larger audience and will make a contribution to shape and grow the market going forward.*

### **Ulrich Feiter**

**CEO of Parceval and SABPA founder**



## SMME comment

*Thank you for the sponsorship, for the platform and for the opportunity to bring to the table the ways in which we are innovating with Marula in Botswana. This was a very significant engagement and experience for me, the Natural Products Association of Botswana and even my business, Nubian Seed. I have learned a lot this week and I am so encouraged about the development of the industry we are a part of. I'm grateful to be positioned as an active player in this space alongside all of you as we drive and advance the potential of our African plant diversity.*

**Tuduetso Tebape**  
Executive Director, Nubian Seed

## EU buyer comment

*The African Biotrade Festival itself was a great success and you should definitely try to make it happen once a year and even activate more buyers from Europe to participate!*

**Daniel Fraas**  
Vice President, Schwabe

## EU trade association comment

*Thanks again for having invited me to this great event; it was a pleasure meeting you all in person and I am looking forward to pursuing our collaboration in the future!*

**Sven Ballschmiede**  
Executive Director, International Organization of the Flavor Industry





# Selected content from speeches and presentations

## **Mr Philipp Ischer, Programme Manager for Trade Promotion, SECO Switzerland**

- The African Biotrade Festival has come a long way from the initial discussions on paper as part of the SECO funded ABioSA phase II project planning in 2020/21 between the partners.
- It has been pleasing to see robust and committed sector organisations at the pavilions dedicated to key species, and the vital support infrastructure provided by research, testing and standards which is an outflow from the six Sector Plans developed and now implemented through an intensive stakeholder engagement process facilitated by the ABioSA project.
- We have some SMMEs here today who are proudly South African businesses, but we are also delighted to see businesses and biotrade stakeholders from Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Madagascar and Cameroon.

## **Ms Jessica Suplie, Counsellor for Environmental and Climate Affairs, German Embassy**

- In 2019, the Rooibos sector signed the world's first industry-wide Benefit-Sharing Agreement recognising the KhoiKhoi and San people as the holders of Rooibos traditional knowledge.
- The multi-stakeholder ABS Capacity Development Initiative supported this process.
- We will be witnessing the second industry-wide Benefit-Sharing Agreement tonight.
- GIZ SA is hosting and implementing two biotrade projects, being the SECO funded ABioSA and BMZ funded BioInnovation Africa (BIA). These two projects are complementary to each other, where ABioSA focuses on a supply/"bottom-up" approach of supporting SMMEs to access new local and international markets while ensuring local communities share in the benefits; BIA focuses on a demand/"top-down" approach through supporting the African and European private sectors to develop mutually beneficial business partnerships based on ethical, social and environmental standards, including equitable benefit-sharing and the sustainable use of genetic resources.
- These projects are important in supporting the German 2030 agenda in building inclusive societies, sustainable value chains and contributing to climate change adaptation.
- This project naturally lends itself to respond to key quality criteria dealing with human rights and gender equality. Women are driving the natural products industry all the way from policy making, planting and harvesting, to processing, value adding, sales and marketing. Although their voices may not always be heard, the BIA project would like to contribute to making their voices louder in the second phase that started in January 2023.

## **Ms Mamogala Musekene, Acting Director General, DFFE**

- The DFFE could not be more proud of what we have achieved at the African Biotrade Festival.
- Thank you to our sister government department, the dtic, for partnering with us in this event, together with the ABioSA and BioInnovation Africa (BIA) projects. Thank you to the funders and implementers behind these projects, being SECO, BMZ and GIZ.
- We hope that the African Biotrade Festival brand will become a household name in the industry with it growing in the future with more partners coming on board.
- Thank you to the technical partners that have come on board to provide us with such engaging conference sessions.
- The intention of the event is to create a platform to discuss and address biotrade challenges and opportunities, with an emphasis on market access, building business support networks, and creating linkages within the wider biotrade ecosystem.
- The festival celebrates and promotes efforts by value chain actors and supporters to increase confidence in

availability, quality, consistency and traceability of southern African plant ingredients and products. It also showcases the enabling biotrade environment that has been developed over the past few years.

- The biotrade supports the achievement of key government targets including job creation, empowerment of women and rural development - in South Africa and the wider region.
- We all know that there is scope for indigenous biodiversity to be better represented in Africa's export economies. We know the benefits this will bring to job creation, economic growth, rural development and protection of biodiversity. This event is an important first step. Let us work together and build upon it.



# AFRICAN BIOTRADE FESTIVAL