

OVERVIEW OF WORLD PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF ORGANIC WILD COLLECTED PRODUCTS



ABSTRACT FOR TRADE INFORMATION SERVICES

ID=38911

2007

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International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO

Overview of World Production and Marketing of Organic Wild Collected Products.

Geneva: ITC, 2007. vi, 91 p.

Doc. No. MDS-07-139.E

Study aiming to provide information on the worldwide production of and markets for organic wild collected products - discusses terminology used in wild collection; presents an overview of organic and other standards that relate to wild collection; provides data and background information about collection and marketing of certified organic wild collected products; includes selected case studies: Devil's claw from Southern Africa, Argan oil from Morocco, wild grown medicinal and aromatic plants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and seaweed from North-America.

Descriptors: **Organic Products, Plant products, Medicinal plants, Aquatic plants, Standards, Market Surveys.**

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ITC supports developing and transition economies, and particularly their business sector, in their efforts to realize their full potential for developing exports and improving import operations.

ITC works in six areas:

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ITC supports the development of exports in organic and natural products from developing countries through technical assistance to trade support institutions, government bodies, the private sector and producer organizations.

www.intracen.org/organics

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International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) was established in 1972 as an umbrella organization for national organic agriculture associations. Members also include certification bodies, traders and processors, research and training institutions, consultancy agencies and others working in the organic sector.

IFOAM's work is based on its four principles of organic agriculture, *i.e.*

- the principle of health
- the principle of ecology
- the principle of fairness
- the principle of care

IFOAM works towards the worldwide adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems that are based on these principles and represents the organic agriculture movement at the United Nations and other inter-governmental agencies.

IFOAM is a grassroots and member-driven organization, which has the FOAM General Assembly as its base. An important part of IFOAM is its Organic Guarantee System (OGS), which is designed to facilitate the development of organic standards and third-party certification worldwide, and to provide an international guarantee of these standards and organic certification. The IFOAM Basic Standards and the Accreditation Criteria are two of the main components of the OGS.

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Acknowledgements

This report was initially prepared for the 1st IFOAM Conference on Organic Wild Production held in Bosnia-Herzegovina in May 2006. It is freely available from the ITC website www.intracen.org/organics.

ITC and the authors would like to thank the organisers of the IFOAM conference, the Agricultural Institute of the Republic of Srpska (AIRS) and Gunnar Rundgren of Grolink, for having initiated and supported the work. Special thanks also go to the many certification bodies and trading companies that have been interviewed during the course of this study, either by email, phone or during personal visits.

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This report was formatted by Emerentiana Kageuka and Anne Thobie (ITC).

Foreword

The collection of plant products from the wild is an important economic activity for millions of people. Collection of roots, leaves, nuts and fruits takes place in forests and marginal lands outside areas of agricultural cultivation. The areas are often important wildlife habitats and reservoirs of biodiversity. The people involved in collection are usually landless and poor and so rely heavily on the cash income that this seasonal work brings.

The market for “natural” products is growing as consumers demand ever greater quantities of foods, cosmetics and medicines that contain natural ingredients. This increased demand is raising prices. When transmitted through the value chain, these higher prices will reduce poverty levels of collectors but can also lead to overexploitation and in worst cases species extinction. Higher demand pushes people to harvest plants beyond their capacity to regenerate. This is particularly the case in open access lands or lands with weak communal management.

Without strong local organizations (e.g. community groups managing natural resources) there are few ways to regulate the harvest levels. In view of the weakness of environmental regulation enforcement agencies, it is therefore pertinent to consider how policy makers can utilize market-based mechanisms to manage natural resources.

Organic certification offers a market-based mechanism for policy makers and local organizations to consider. It is a potential “win-win” for environmental management and poverty reduction. Organic management systems are strongly linked to environmental benefits including safeguarding biodiversity and preventing soil erosion and water contamination. Higher prices generate higher incomes for collectors.

However, *no standard alone can guarantee sustainable management of natural resources* particularly of open access resources. Standards provide a tool for collectors and local organizations working together with a common objective. Technical assistance agencies build social capital through carrying out resource assessments and training programmes. Certification companies are also dynamic agents in this process through demanding traceability and ensuring standards are complied with..

Organic certification is therefore under scrutiny as a means to improve natural resource management and generate higher incomes for communities. This paper is intended to brief policy makers and practitioners about the role and potential of organic management and certification.

This work reviews how organic and several other important standards address the issue of sustainable management of collection areas. It also provides an overview of market trends in terms of products certified, land areas, numbers of collectors and market values. The work reveals that there is a huge variety of natural products (over 400 species), totalling almost 250,000 tonnes and covering 62 million hectares of land. The global value of the market for

products collected in the wild is estimated at between 630 and 830 million EURO, approximately 5-10% of the global market.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alexander Kasterine', with a long, sweeping underline stroke extending to the right.

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April 2008

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