ISSC-MAP field consultation – Projects

1. Company Anđelc d.o.o., Bosnia and Herzegovina
2. Non-profit Iracambi Medicinal Plants Project (IMP), now Medicina da Mata, Brazil
3. State-owned area of Wanglang National Nature Reserve & Baima State Forest, China
4. Community-based Agro-artisanal producers’ association (AAPPSME), Ecuador
5. Non-profit Sustainably Harvested Devil’s Claw (SHDC) project, Namibia
1. Company Andelic d.o.o., Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Dr. Dagmar Lange, Britta Pätzold, Rankica Bahtijarevic -

The field consultation was undertaken in cooperation with Mr. Radovan Andelic and his company Andelic d.o.o., located in Trebinje in the South East of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The town is situated in a great plain named Popovo polje, a karst field (Krasko polje), along the Trebisnjia river, 250m above sea level. Merged under the umbrella organisation sage export there had been 5 enterprises (2 in Croatia, 2 in Montenegro and 1 in Trebinje) in the former Yugoslavian herb sector. The Trebinje area was well known for its sage production. Owing to the war in the first half of the 1990th, the herb market broke down. Similar to other market fields, Albania took over BiH’s role in the market. None of the former five companies still exists. After war, smaller herb companies came up.

Andelić d.o.o. produces certified organic essential oils (mainly for export) and is a supplier of wild grown medicinal herbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Currently the company obtains the plant raw materials from about 120 collector families. Collecting herbs is in most cases an additional income. The collection areas are located in the Mediterranean region closed to the Adriatic Sea and in the mountainous region in Central Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the years, the company has broadened its range of products, offering a maximum of 41 different herbs and 14 essential oils depending on demand. The essential oils are produced in the company’s own distillery.

Andelić d.o.o. participated in a former GTZ/SIPPO project aiming to move existing MAP collection and business management towards a sustainable use of biodiversity. Companies involved became organically certified for wild collection.

The field consultation focused on the wild collection of Helichrysum italicum (local name: smilje), an aromatic dwarf shrub belonging to the family Asteraceae. It is growing in open, dry and stony places with a bushy vegetation of low density, coverage and height (natural and succession stages, pioneer plant) in the Mediterranean area. Smilje is mainly collected for commercial purpose, not for private use. The plant is almost solely collected on state-owned land, one to two times per year. The first collection takes place in midst June and lasts about 1 week (= summer-Helichrysum). The second collection takes place in October, and lasts also only some days (= autumn-Helichrysum). Collectors follow the collection method described in a collector’s manual, elaborated by SIPPO and GTZ.

- Supported by SIPPO (Swiss Import Promotion Programme), Switzerland -
2. Iracambi Medicinal Plants Project (IMP), now Medicina da Mata, Brazil

- Dr. Wolfgang Kathe, Eleanor Gallia, Ximena Buitrón, Benjamin Gilbert, Charlie Evans, Marcelo Mendes do Amaral -

Iracambi is located in the Southeast corner of the Brazilian State of Minas Gerais, where most of the forest is privately owned by smallholders. Iracambi lies within the municipality of Rosário da Limeira within the district of Muriaé and is adjacent to the Serra do Brigadeiro State Park. It is part of a larger conservation project to protect the Atlantic Rainforest, identified as one of the world's most globally important biodiversity hotspots. Originally founded in 1989 as a farm, Iracambi has changed during the years and is now a complex of three different units: Iracambi Recursos Naturais Ltda., a company which runs the farmland and manages the research centre; the Iracambi Atlantic Rainforest Research Center with its four defined research priority areas land use management, forest restoration, income generating alternatives and community understanding and engagement; and Amigos de Iracambi, a non-profit organisation dedicated to helping forests and forest people survive through better management of forest lands. Today, Iracambi manages a farm of about 500 ha.

Iracambi’s mission is to make conservation of the rainforest more attractive than its destruction. The Iracambi Medicinal Plants project (IMP), known as Medicina da Mata (MdaM), is a core element to achieve this goal. It began in 1999 with research on the sustainable development of indigenous medicinal plant species and has widened the scope of its work considerably since then. Basic achievements in the past 5 years were the development of a medicinal plant trail, biological, ethno-botanical and pharmaceutical research into the most frequently used medicinal plant species in the area, preparatory studies in traditional harvesting techniques, the development of a herbarium, and the development of a nursery to propagate selected medicinal plant species for intercropping into the secondary forest.

Iracambi is a volunteer-based programme. Recently, however, thanks to external funding (MHS), Medicina da Mata has started to employ a project manager; the nursery assistant and several consultants are also paid for their work within MdaM. In addition, the number of Brazilian people working at Iracambi and within MdaM has increased. During the next 2 years, MdaM is planning to start the development of a sustainable use scheme for selected medicinal plants species, including their use for local primary health care needs as well as product development and market access. A management plan is currently in development. The central aim is to generate, directly or indirectly, additional forest-based benefits and / or income for local farmers and thus contribute to the conservation of the forest and preventing its progressing destruction for planting cash crops or conversion into pastures.

Further information: www.iracambi.com

- Supported by Manfred-Hermsen – Stiftung, Germany -
3. Wanglang National Nature Reserve & Baima State Forest, China

- Dr. Tony Cunningham, Luo Peng, Susanne Honnef -

This field consultation on the International Standard for Sustainable Wild Collection of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ISSC-MAP) was carried out in and around Wanglang National Nature Reserve, Pingwu county, Sichuan, one of the almost 50 nature reserves set aside to protect the habitat of the Giant Panda.

At a global scale, China is the largest exporter, importer and consumer of medicinal plants. Due to cultural preferences combined with demographic and economic changes, the Traditional Chinese Medicines (TCM) market is growing at 8% per year. This may grow even faster with the growing link to formal, industrialised production and export of TCM preparations. The Traditional Chinese Medicines are for 90% based on plants. In China alone, more than 10,000 species are in use. Of all MAP species in China, 75% are to be found in the Minshan area.

The Minshan landscape is located in the heart of the forests of the upper Yangtze River with an area of 35,000 km² that covers seven counties in Sichuan and Gansu province. This region has been identified as the highest priority area for biodiversity conservation in China by WWF China. The Yangtze River is one of the most important ecosystems in the world, and as such a conservation focus area of the Chinese government and international organisations. The Minshan landscape has a unique cultural diversity of minority groups including Tibetans, Qiang, and Muslims, who make up 28% of the total population of over one million in this region. Farmers make up 80% of the total population. In the Minshan area itself, more than 500 villages are located in the biodiversity priority areas. 100% of these villages are involved in the wild collection of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAP). At least one third of the households in these villages can be classified as poor and their main sources of income is the wild collection of MAP. Monitoring and patrolling by the local forestry departments has shown that the wild collection of MAP has had a major impact on biodiversity in the area.

The region faces many challenges for biodiversity conservation which are characteristic for many other Chinese areas, as unclear land use rights, unclear regulations and poor enforcement, unsustainable harvesting activities and poverty. Objective of WWF’s work in this area is to develop a model for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in Minshan, through the sustainable use (collection and trade) of wild MAP that can be used as an example in other areas.

- Supported by WWF Germany -
4. Agro-arteranal producers’ association (AAPPSME), Ecuador

- Dr. Wolfgang Kathe, Ximena Buitrón, María Arguello, Pierre Hauselmann, Claire Nicklin –

The private, non-profit organization AAPPSME (Asociación Agro-artesanal de Productores de Plantas Secas Medicinales del Ecuador) is located in Chuquiribamba, in the Province of Loja in Southern Ecuador. The association was created in 2001. The communities that belong to the AAPPSME, form part of the Union of Farmer Organizations of Chantaco, Chuquiribamba and Taquil, an organization that was formed in 1996. Previously, all of the member communities were part of a project called Rural Forest Development, which developed communal organic tree nurseries to produce saplings in plantations and family farms.

The aim of AAPPSME is to produce and commercialize the so called ‘Horchata de Loja’ (a traditional beverage mostly prepared as tea) and other medicinal plant products from the area around Chuquiribamba. Horchata originates from the Province of Loja although it is meanwhile produced and consumed in some other parts of Ecuador and even exported. In the traditional composition used by AAPPSME, Horchata is composed of 28 (medicinal) plant species, five of which are native species and two of which are wild collected: Cucharillo (Oreocallis grandiflora) and Cola de Caballo (horsetail – Equisetum bogotense). The plants come from family gardens and from the native forests and wild areas around the communities. Most families have small farms of between 1 and 1.5 hectares.

The project covers 4 communities with 14 hamlets: Chantaco (4 hamlets), Chuquiribamba (5 hamlets), Gualel (4 hamlets) and Taquil (1 hamlet) with a total project area of 28,505 hectares. AAPPSME consists of 40 permanent members (socios) and around 100 supplier families (familias proveedoras). The suppliers deliver their material directly to the association and receive a fixed price for the material. The material needs to comply with the association’s own quality standards. To standardize and control quality further and achieve constant, reliable supply, the association aims at cultivating the two species that are still collected from the wild. However, cultivation of these species is not easy and it can be assumed that they will need to be collected from the wild at least in the medium term. AAPPSME also buys fresh material from the local market when they cannot fill orders with their own production. Thus AAPPSME is a cooperative as well as a buyer. They own three collection center and one processing center where they dry the plants, pack the product and store it. Horchata from AAPPSME is both sold on the local and national markets and is exported to the USA. In the future, AAPPSME plans to export Horchata also to Europe. To ease market access in Europe, organic certification is strived for.

AAPPSME is supported by the UNCTAD BioTrade facilitation programme, its Ecuadorian counterpart CORPEI (Corporación de Promoción de Exportaciones e Inversiones), EcoCiencia (Fundación Ecuatoriana de Estudios Ecológicos) and FundaTierra (Fundación Agro-ecológica Amigos de la Tierra). The project is also supported by FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organization), FECD (Fondo Ecuadoriano Canadiense de Desarrollo), CEA (Coordinadora Ecuadoriana de Agroecologia), Cuerpo de Paz (Peace Corps), FOMRENA (Fondo Regional de Tecnologias Apropiadas en Manejo Sostenible de Recursos Naturales Renovables) and HCPL (Honorable Consejo Provincial de Loja).

- supported by UNCTAD BioTrade Programme & Manfred-Hermsen Stiftung, Germany -
5. The Sustainably Harvested Devil’s Claw (SHDC) project, Namibia

- David Newton, Dave Cole –

The project is located in the semiarid Omaheke region of Namibia. It is managed by the ‘Centre for Research Information and Action in Africa – Southern African Development and Consulting (CRIAA SA-DC) a Namibian registered not-for-gain company. The SHDC project started on one resettlement farm (Vergenoeg) in 1997 and by 1999/2000 had expanded to 17 other farms and covered an area of some 307,415 ha. These resettlement farms were established prior to independence, with the main purpose of providing emergency grazing for communal farmers in times of drought. However, they became permanently inhabited by these farmers and in the absence of any clear policies regarding for example tenure they became prone to gross mismanagement. In addition, many farm labours that lost their jobs on commercial farms began to settle on these farms. Ecological conditions comprise partially degraded Kalahari woodland and shrubland.

Devil’s claw grows mainly in the Kalahari sands of Namibia, Botswana, South Africa and Angola, and, to a lesser extent, in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. In Namibia it was listed in 1977 as a protected species under the Nature Conservation Ordinance of 1975. Its secondary storage tubers contain compounds that have analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties.

It is widely accepted that the indigenous inhabitants of southern Africa, mainly the San, discovered the medicinal properties of devil’s claw and used the tubers for the treatment of a variety of ailments. Its medicinal value for the treatment of rheumatism and arthritis type ailments has however only been recognised by “western medicine” in the last 50 years. Thousands of harvesters and their families from Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa rely on wild collection as a primary or sole cash income.

The main objectives of the SHDC project are:

- To enable more marginalised rural communities to improve their household food security through earning a reasonable income from the sale of sustainably harvested devil’s claw.
- To equip harvester groups to manage and utilise their resource independently on a sustainable basis and to facilitate their direct involvement in the trade by establishing a reliable market for their production.
- To build their own capacity to manage their harvesting and trade, both in the form of organisational support and with such simple physical things such as scales, record books, knives’, drying frames and bags.
- To further demonstrate, on a scale large enough to be significant in the overall market, the viability of a fair trade in sustainably harvested devil’s claw.

The SHDC devil’s claw is certified “Organic” by the Soil Association (UK). This has resulted in a higher selling price which in turn has made it possible for higher prices to be paid to harvesters. This has enabled harvesters to recognise that there is a direct link between compliance with the standards and the higher prices paid, and to take resource management decisions accordingly.

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