

Take a Walk on the Wild Side of the GSPC: Introducing the International Standard for Sustainable Wild Collection of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ISSC-MAP)

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Medicinal and Aromatic Plants – Essential Resources, Declining Supplies

An estimated 50,000 - 70,000 plant species are used in traditional and modern medicine throughout the world. These species make an essential contribution to healthcare, provide an important source of income to rural harvesters, and, along with species used more for their aromatic properties, fuel a major industry in herbal products, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and fragrances. Very few medicinal plant species are commercially cultivated - most are wild collected. Unsustainable wild collection in response to increasing demand is threatening the survival of many of these species, and therefore the healthcare options and income potential of the people who depend on them.

The German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation BfN, The World Conservation Union (IUCN), WWF and TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, have led the development of an International Standard for the Sustainable Wild Collection of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants. Version 1 of the Standard, launched in February 2007, is now available for application to MAP wild-collection operations. Specific projects are being developed to assess the standard's applicability in a variety of geographic, biological and socio-economic conditions of MAP collection and use.

Designed for use by governments, NGOs, IGOs and companies seeking to promote sustainable and ethical use of wild medicinals, ISSC-MAP can make an important contribution to delivery of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC), particularly its targets for sustainable livelihoods based on indigenous and local knowledge, innovations and practices (13) and plant-based products derived from sustainably managed resources (12). BfN, IUCN, WWF and TRAFFIC convened a side event to introduce the Standard to SBSTTA participants during SBSTTA 12.

One of the key messages brought from SBSTTA 12 was the need for greater progress toward achieving certain GSPC targets, including targets 3 and 12. During this side event Danna Leaman, Chair of the IUCN SSC Medicinal Plant Specialist Group, showed how ISSC-MAP can contribute to achieving several GSPC targets, for example supporting measures for target 12 by tracking increases in:

- products meeting verifiable criteria for sustainable wild collection,
- companies and industry associations adopting codes of good practice that address sustainable wild collection of MAPs; and
- existing systems of certification (organic, fair trade, forest management) incorporating sustainable wild collection of MAPs.

Uwe Schippmann, BfN, explained from a government perspective, why practice-oriented criteria and indicators are needed for sourcing raw materials, and their

importance for user/importing countries. He pointed out that the ISSC-MAP was developed through a broad stakeholder consultation, involving more than 150 experts from environmental, socio-economic and fair trade sectors. Through close discussion with ISSC-MAP's Advisory Group, four priority scenarios were identified for the implementation of the Standard: Certification Processes, Resource Management, Voluntary Codes of Practice, and Policy and Legal Adoption.

With the presentation of four project examples representing different geographic, ecosystem and socioeconomic conditions, Britta Pätzold, WWF and TRAFFIC, gave the side event participants a better understanding of how ISSC-MAP can be implemented following these priority implementation scenarios. The projects showed that ISSC-MAP can be used as a tool for sustainable management and training to complement organic certification; as a tool to improve MAP resource management and monitoring at the level of area management, and support marketing of sustainably harvested products; as a tool to contribute to the development of principles, criteria and indicators on the formulation of CITES non detriment findings for those taxa of high priority, e.g. timber species, *Prunus africana* and other medicinal plants.

In the side event participants from 15 countries both learned about the Standard and discussed how it can be used to achieve sustainable use and conservation of medicinal and aromatic plants in their countries.

Among the main discussion points were questions on how the additional costs resulting from ISSC-MAP implementation can be calculated and covered, how compliance with the standard will be verified and how it can be ensured that harvesters receive the benefits. The initial implementation phase of the ISSC-MAP will provide answers to the aforementioned questions, providing experiences from different uptake strategies that will help to identify efficient and cost effective mechanisms. Side event participants identified the need to increase local capacity for assessing the status of medicinal plant resources as a key priority. User-friendly guidance documents are being produced alongside ISSC-MAP, with suggestions for a rapid resource assessment methodology being tested as a part of this process. .

For more information please visit the project website www.floraweb.de/MAP-pro or contact the ISSC-MAP Secretariat at MAP-Standards-Criteria@wwf.de Feedback on the ISSC-MAP and its guidance documents are welcome, as well as ideas for projects and institutions interested in ISSC-MAP implementation.