

Benefit Sharing in Practice: Ecoflora

Innovation and ethical sourcing in Colombia

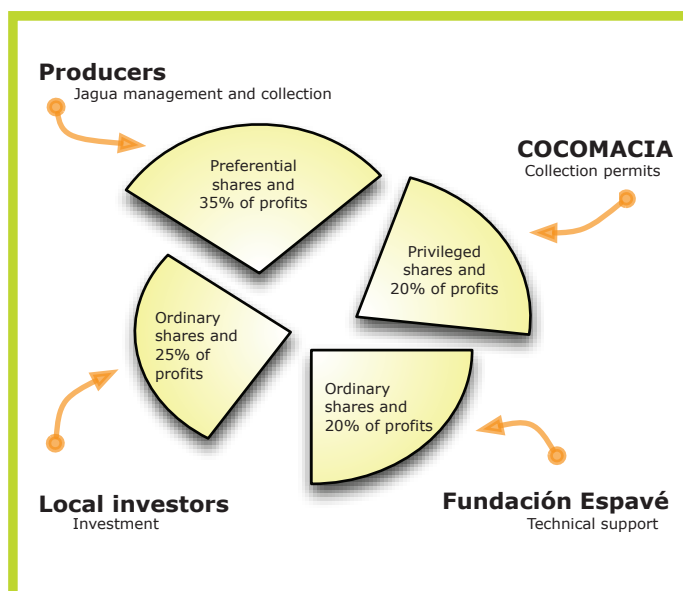
Ecoflora is a Colombian company recognized as a leader in the development of inputs and services derived from biodiversity. Its vision is providing the best choice in natural bioinputs, while contributing to a more ethical and ecological world. Since 2009, Ecoflora Cares (www.ecofloracares.com) is a member of the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT).

One of the Ecoflora products is a blue dye, extracted from the jagua fruit (*Genipa americana*) in the Colombian Chocó. Through the sourcing of jagua and the development of this dye, Ecoflora is seeking to provide the market with a natural, high-quality input, as well as to promote sustainable use and economic development in a region rich in biodiversity yet suffering from significant poverty. Work on jagua has been taken forth in collaboration with different entities. Fundación Espavé, a nonprofit organization and a member of UEBT, has taken the lead in training producers. Bosque Húmedo Biodiverso (BHB), a community entrepreneurial initiative, coordinates local production dynamics with commercial partners. Ecoflora also plays a key role, through both its research into new applications for jagua and its commitment to Ethical BioTrade.



Source: Wikipedia.org

Promoting dialogue and contributing to local sustainable development



Bosque Húmedo Biodiverso

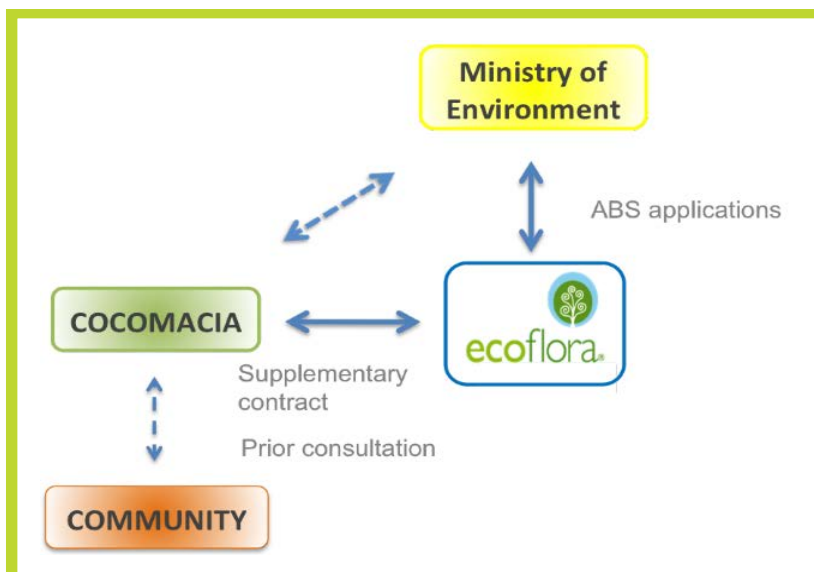
Existing collaboration in the jagua supply chain constitutes a solid basis for the dialogue among all actors required by Ethical BioTrade. In addition, Ecoflora has developed initiatives such as a supply chain committee, which brings actors together and fosters improved communication. For example, the supply chain committee seeks to ensure that there is understanding of the different contributions to the value chain, from the sustainable harvesting of the fruit to its transformation into an ingredient and final product.

Ethical sourcing should also contribute to local sustainable development. Ecoflora has worked with COCOMACIA, the authority charged with administering collective territories in the region, to frame

the jagua chain in the regional development plan. The role of BHB is also vital given that, through a shareholding scheme, this initiative incorporates producers and other local actors (see Box). Thus, the involvement of local producers in the value chain and the equitable prices they receive for the jagua fruit contribute to improving the quality of life at the community level.

Towards compliance with ABS requirements

Ecoflora is currently taking measures to secure the permits required by Colombian laws and regulations on access and benefit sharing (ABS). The company has submitted applications for research on the most favorable processing conditions for a stable and concentrated dye, as well as for activities aimed at strengthening the supply chain. Furthermore, Ecoflora has negotiated a supplementary contract with COCOMACIA, which is considered by Colombian legislation as the provider of genetic resources and derivatives (see Box). The contract outlines terms for benefit sharing that seek to ensure equity and feasibility from the economic, environmental and social perspectives. In this regard, consultations have taken place with COCOMACIA and representatives from local communities, the government and other stakeholders. Ecoflora has also organized a training on ABS legislation, conducted by an independent expert, and has supported the sharing of information at the community level.



Legal requirements on ABS

Benefit Sharing in Ethical BioTrade

Equitable sharing of benefits from biodiversity is at the core of Ethical BioTrade, which seeks to advance incentives at the local level for the sustainable use of biodiversity, as well as adequate recognition of the contributions of local actors. Principle 3 of the Ethical BioTrade Standard deals with equitable benefit sharing, both in the sourcing activities and in biodiversity-based research and development. “Benefit Sharing in Practice” provides concrete examples of how members of the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) are working towards equitable sharing of benefits in their policies and practices linked to natural ingredients.

Looking forward

As a UEBT member, Ecoflora Cares continues integrating the Ethical BioTrade principles in its systems and activities. There is additional training for all actors on the Ethical BioTrade principles, as well as on specific issues such as intellectual property. Ensuring a genuine dialogue is also a continuous challenge, so there are ongoing efforts to promote communication and exchange between actors. For example, given that BHB is a recent community initiative, it is fundamental to continue supporting the effective engagement of producers and other local stakeholders. Finally, Ecoflora has already created an intellectual property management committee, whose tasks include advancing consistency with the relevant UEBT principles. At present, the company is considering the systematization of this approach through a specific policy on patents and biodiversity.

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