

FairWild Certification: Stories from the Scheme

The FairWild Standard is a set of principles guiding best practice in sustainable harvest and fair trade of wild plant ingredients. One of the ways in which it is being used in practice is as the basis of a third-party audited certification scheme, now in operation since 2007. This article provides a brief overview of the scheme, and news updates from companies involved.

The FairWild certification scheme provides comprehensive coverage of environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability. The ecological requirements were strengthened in 2010 when the original FairWild Standard version 1.0¹ was merged with the International Standard for Sustainable Collection of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ISSC-MAP)², the latter having a strong focus on conservation and resource management aspects. Audit and certification against FairWild Standard version 2.0 (FairWild Foundation, 2010a) is carried out by the accredited certification body for FairWild, the Swiss-based Institute for Marketecology (IMO)³.

FairWild certification shares some features in common with organic and other social and fair trade schemes, but occupies its own special niche. Organic certification of wild crop harvesting is based primarily on the principles of organic agriculture (e.g. controlled use of inputs), with some requirements also on sustainable harvesting, whereas FairWild focuses on ecological and social sustainability in a wider sense, going much more deeply into resource management issues. FairWild's social principles have much in common with those of other fair trade schemes. However, the major difference is that FairWild focuses on wild collection, while most other fair trade schemes have been designed for the certification of agriculture and products derived from it. The organization of wild collection is typically very different from that found in agriculture, and FairWild is designed to meet the needs of collectors and their communities.

Features of the scheme

Under the scheme, an annual on-site audit is required, assessing the performance of the wild collection operation against a comprehensive set of control points (FairWild Foundation, 2010b). Those species and collection situations considered to be at "high risk" of unsustainable wild collection must meet an additional set of indicators. The initial classification of risk status is carried out in collaboration with the IUCN/SSC Medicinal Plants Specialist Group, based on an analysis of the species' biology, harvest methods used, conservation status, and a number of other factors.

¹Development of FairWild Standard version 1.0 was initiated by SIPPO (the Swiss Import Promotion Programme) in co-operation with Forum Essenzia e.V. and IMO (Institute for Marketecology). The Standard focused mainly on social and fair trade aspects of wild collection.

²Development of the International Standard for Sustainable Collection of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ISSC-MAP) was supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), TRAFFIC, WWF, and IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature). This was primarily an ecological sustainability standard with supporting elements of economic and social sustainability. ³www.imo.ch

The 11 Principles of the FairWild Standard

- Maintaining wild plant resources.
- Preventing negative environmental impacts.
- Complying with laws, regulations, and agreements.
- Respecting customary rights and benefit sharing.
- Promoting fair contractual relationships between operators and collectors.
- Limiting participation of children in wild collection activities.
- Ensuring benefits for collectors and their communities.
- Ensuring fair working conditions for all workers of the FairWild collection operations.
- Applying responsible management practices.
- Applying responsible business practices.
- Promoting FairWild buyer commitment.

The FairWild scheme requires continuous improvement over the first five years of implementation. In their application to the scheme, the company must clearly define the scope proposed for certification, and then go on to develop species-area management plans for FairWild collection sites, conduct resource inventories and establish monitoring systems for the target species. The company will also train collectors on sustainable harvesting techniques. Formation of a collectors' association is encouraged, to improve communications between the company and collectors. A Premium fund is established to enable the buyer of the FairWild ingredients to invest in social development projects with the collectors and their communities. To achieve certification, the company must meet all mandatory requirements set in that year of the scheme, and also gain a minimum total score that increases over the first five years.

The FairWild certification scheme in action

At the end of 2012, 10 wild collection operations were certified, offering around 25 different FairWild-certified species between them. The scheme has gradually expanded since it began in 2007 with the first five audits. It is available worldwide, with a number of collection operations now working towards certification—already in 2013 an additional two companies have passed their Year 1 audit. A full list is maintained on the FairWild website.

In addition to the FairWild-certified companies, a number of other companies may be involved in handling the FairWild-certified ingredients along the trade chain—processing the ingredients and distributing them worldwide. Manufacturers that use the FairWild-certified ingredients in their finished products may display the FairWild logo on their packaging, according to a licence agreement and annual fee paid to the FairWild Foundation. Products bearing the FairWild mark have been available since 2010, and are now found in the USA, Canada, Japan and many countries in the EU and beyond.

Piloting FairWild-certification of Frankincense in Kenya

Neal's Yard Remedies is one of the UK's most well known natural cosmetic companies, retailing also an extensive range of herbal ingredients used in herbal medicine. For several years, the company has been working on the sustainable sourcing of Frankincense resin, used in one of its most popular ranges of cosmetics products. In July 2013, the first of the Neal's Yard Remedies products to contain certified ingredients was launched in the UK. The product contains a blend of Frankincense oils from three tree species. Two of them—*Commiphora confusa* and *Boswellia neglecta*—are from organic and FairWild-certified sources in Kenya, where they are wild-harvested from semi-desert arid lands. Over a five-year period, the FairWild scheme will help to implement a comprehensive management and monitoring system for sustainable collection of tree resins, ensure fair payment to collectors and help establish a Premium fund for community development projects.



COLIN WINTER / NEAL'S YARD REMEDIES

Collecting FairWild-certified Frankincense in Kenya.

What happened next for Medicinal plant of the year 2012, liquorice?

Liquorice root has featured several times in previous issues of the TRAFFIC Bulletin. In 2012, it was selected as "Medicinal plant of the year", due to its importance to human well-being worldwide. Liquorice *Glycyrrhiza uralensis* has been the focus of sustainable harvesting efforts through the FairWild scheme. A harvesting operation of *G. uralensis* in Kazakhstan was one of the first to be audited, the ingredients being traded through the German company Martin Bauer GmbH, who have supported the certification pilot in collaboration with US-based manufacturer Traditional Medicinals Inc. The harvesting is managed through a rotation system, with a six-year interval between harvestings, and with up to half of the roots left in the ground

to regenerate, thus reducing the impact not only on the target species but the whole ecosystem.

The FairWild certified liquorice root is used in a number of Traditional Medicinal's herbal teas, including Throat Coat® which is one of the top-selling medicinal teas in Canada and the USA. In 2012, the *Bulletin* reported the launch of Pukka Herbs' Organic Peppermint and FairWild liquorice tea, which also used ingredients from this source. The tea was the cornerstone of a consumer campaign and sponsorship with WWF—part of a 10-year anniversary celebration for Pukka. The tea is now retailed worldwide, and the campaign successfully raised over GBP50 000 for WWF. The consumer campaign was a winner of the inaugural 2degrees Sustainability Champions Award in this category⁴. FairWild-certified liquorice is increasingly in demand by industry, and UK-based company Organic Herb Trading Company now also offers a certified source from a producer in Spain.

In addition to the popularity of the certified ingredients with consumers, the scheme has also been beneficial to those involved in harvesting. Premium funds have been used to improve the living conditions of the collectors, including the building of showers, toilets and kitchen facilities, and also to pay for healthcare treatments.

Herbal ingredients: spotlight on Europe

Europe has a rich history of wild plant collection, and an important role in the international trade as both source and consumer region. A number of the FairWild certified collection operations are in Central and Eastern Europe, providing the market with wild plant ingredients such as the root and leaf of Marshmallow *Althaea officinalis* from Hungary (Schmidt & Co. Kft), collected by Roma people who traditionally earn income from wild collection. Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* root and Nettle *Urtica dioica* leaf are on offer from Poland (Runo sp. z o.o.), where many of the collectors are elderly and have been collecting medicinal plants throughout their lives, in an area surrounding Europe's last standing primeval lowland forest—the Białowieża Forest—where European forest bison and moose still graze. The Raspberry *Rubus idaeus* leaf in Goražde, Bosnia & Herzegovina (Boletus d.o.o.) is largely harvested by Muslim women, who have traditionally collected these plants.

The scheme continues to expand in this important region. In 2012, two collection companies from Bulgaria became certified for the first time, offering FairWild certified ingredients such as Dandelion, Juniper *Juniperus communis*, Elderflower *Sambucus nigra* and Rose hip *Rosa canina*. Producers in Central Europe are also learning about FairWild through TRAFFIC's and WWF-Hungary's Traditional and Wild project in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland and Hungary.

References

- FairWild Foundation (2010a). *FairWild Standard: Version 2.0*. FairWild Foundation, Weinfelden, Switzerland.
- FairWild Foundation (2010b). *FairWild Standard: Version 2.0 / Performance Indicators*. FairWild Foundation, Weinfelden, Switzerland.

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⁴<http://www.2degreesnetwork.com/awards/2013/#winners>