

TRAFFIC

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'WE USE WILD'

FORUM ON WILD PLANT INGREDIENTS
EVENT REPORT

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EVENT SUMMARY

Thousands of consumer products worldwide contain ingredients from wild plants, such as **Brazil nuts, gum arabic, liquorice, shea butter, argan oil, and candelilla wax**. These ingredients can carry a range of hidden risks if not sourced with care. For example, land use change and overharvesting may threaten the plants, while harvesters can receive low pay or operate in conflict areas at high risk of labour rights abuses. Conversely, when sourced responsibly, these ingredients can be powerful forces for good: driving wildlife conservation, combatting climate change, and supporting marginalised livelihoods, thus contributing to businesses' environmental and social goals.

On 4 October 2022, TRAFFIC and the Cambridge Conservation Initiative (CCI) hosted the 'We Use Wild' Forum on Wild Plant Ingredients at the David Attenborough Building in Cambridge, UK, and online. The purpose of this event was to arm participants with the tools and information needed to collaboratively address the risks mentioned above and embrace the opportunities of responsible sourcing.

Forty-three participants attended the Forum (20 in person and 23 virtually) with representation from key stakeholders across certification schemes and standards, leading businesses that use wild plants in their products, business associations, research organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The main question for the Forum was: **How can we catalyse pre-competitive, collective action on responsible sourcing of wild plant ingredients?** In exploring this question, the participants:

- Discussed current gaps in understanding and action around wild plant ingredients
- Identified the key stakeholders in the wild plant industry and what roles they play in the responsible sourcing landscape
- Examined existing tools, including the [WildCheck Platform](#) and the [#WeUseWild Pledge](#) which were formally launched at the event, and explored how these

contribute to existing business commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals, mandatory human rights due diligence, and internal sustainability and ethical trade targets and policies

- Learned how other industry sectors have worked collaboratively to tackle systemic issues

Overall, there was interest from participants in collaborating on the topic of sustainable wild sourcing and continuing conversations started at the Forum. The main outcomes of the Forum were that priority areas for further work were identified, and connections were made between like-minded businesses and certification schemes/standards, laying the foundations for ongoing open dialogue and collaboration. Around 50% of those who attended were interested in signing the We Use Wild Pledge, and the majority said they would use the WildCheck Platform and risk profiles in their work. TRAFFIC is following up with participants to maintain momentum and reinvigorate any ideas attendees might have developed on initiating further action.

Participants in the Forum included:

- **Businesses:** Aldi Sud, and fragrances, FairSource Botanics, Firmenich, L'Occitane Group, L'Oréal, Martin Bauer, Pukka Herbs, Sainsbury's, Traditional Medicinals, Twinings, additional beauty brands who declined to be named
- **Standards and certification schemes:** The Fairtrade Foundation, FairWild Foundation, Soil Association, Union for Ethical BioTrade
- **NGOs, research and industry support organisations:** American Herbal Products Association, Cambridge Conservation Initiative, IDH The Sustainable Trade Initiative, ISEAL Alliance, IUCN, Judge Business School – University of Cambridge, Save Frankincense/Global Frankincense Alliance, Sustainable Herbs Program, TRAFFIC, UNCTAD BioTrade Initiative, WWF

1. WELCOME AND SCENE-SETTING

Mike Maunder, Executive Director, Cambridge Conservation Initiative

Keynote address - Welcome to Cambridge Conservation Initiative and how our work touches daily lives

Participants were welcomed to the David Attenborough Building and Cambridge Conservation Initiative, which co-hosted the Forum. The ubiquity of wild ingredients in

our everyday products was recognised and their importance to harvester communities, businesses, and consumers emphasised. It was stressed that all the stakeholders needed to make a difference to wild ingredients were attending the Forum, and attendees were implored to absorb the learnings of the day and commit to action.

Anastasiya Timoshyna, Director of Strategy, Programme and Impact at TRAFFIC, and IUCN SSC Medicinal Plant Specialist Group Co-Chair
Introducing wild plant ingredients: TRAFFIC's work and situating amongst other business and investment priorities

The focus of this presentation was the importance of action for wild plant ingredients. Although they may be used in small quantities, they can have substantial collective biodiversity consequences. TRAFFIC's work on this subject was introduced, using the example of empowering local communities and harvesters of Jatamansi, a wild medicinal plant, in Nepal. Consumers have an increasing desire to know where a product comes from – which should be the driving force behind the sustainable

'wild plants movement'. Future work should prioritise scaling up and harmonising disparate good practices and projects, facilitate change in the mainstream sectors, consider multiple levers of change (e.g. industry, policy, consumers), and make these shifts quickly, facing the urgency of combined biodiversity and climate change crises.

An attendee commented on the presentation, emphasising that the informality of wild plant harvesting and trade is often a significant problem and increases social risks. Workers' rights and livelihoods should always be considered alongside the ecological reasons for action.

2. STATE OF WILD PLANTS TRADE: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Caitlin Schindler, Plants Trade Programme Manager, TRAFFIC

Key wild ingredients in trade, products they're found in, sustainable and ethical issues, responsible trade opportunities

During this session, an important reference document for wild-harvested plants was introduced: the [WildCheck report](#), published in April 2022 by TRAFFIC, FAO, and the IUCN Species Survival Commission Medicinal Plant Specialist Group. The report features the 'Wild Dozen', twelve flagship wild-harvested species that represent the opportunities and challenges facing wild ingredients on a broader scale.

Ingredient profiles on each of the Wild Dozen are captured within the report, including first-of-their-kind biological and social risk ratings, designed to be integrated into organisations' existing responsible sourcing approaches. [The WildCheck platform](#) was subsequently launched – a streamlined resource hosting brief, accessible profiles for each of the Wild Dozen ingredients and information from the WildCheck report that is most relevant for the private sector to use, including a growing library of responsible sourcing advice. The WildCheck platform is now live and is free for businesses to access.

Panel Discussion: Pre-competitive collaboration on environmental and social issues in supply chains – lessons learned from various sectors

Moderator: **Steven Broad**, Policy Consultant, UNCTAD BioTrade

Panellists:

- **Joshua Wickerham**, Manager - Membership and Engagement, ISEAL Alliance
- **Isha Chauhan**, Senior Program Officer, IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative
- (with apologies) **Holly Johnson**, Chief Scientific Officer, American Herbal Products Association

The panellists were invited to give introductions to their respective backgrounds and organisations. ISEAL Alliance shared learnings from the metals, minerals and mining sector, which led to the creation of their [Framework of Interoperability](#), designed to 'help sustainability standards and other sustainability initiatives navigate the types and intensity of collaboration and interoperability' within any sector. IDH shared experience working in India's first public-private-community coalition, the [Regenerative Production Landscape Collaborative](#), which aims to provide incentives for sustainable production for 100,000 farmers across multiple value chains while conserving 300,000 ha under sustainable land management. Across the varied backgrounds, **the main lessons learned included:**

- Before any action is taken, organisations should understand the current playing field and existing initiatives to avoid duplication of efforts.
- Existing tools and initiatives should be explored to understand how they match an organisation's starting point and end goals, to ensure the right partners or tools are chosen.
- Trust-building is crucial in successful collaborations, and this can take time to build up. The Framework of Interoperability describes the stages of a trust-building

process.

- Any long-term shifts towards sustainability need to benefit all stakeholders involved to remain successful in the long term.
- The differing experiences and knowledge of various stakeholders within a collaboration should be harnessed to maximise success and benefits.
- The critical role of consumer awareness and demand should not be forgotten in any sustainability efforts. Consumers are important drivers of business change, so collaborative initiatives should make an effort to understand the consumers affected by their work and communicate honestly and clearly to them.

The follow-up discussion centred on getting companies on board with sustainability efforts and synergising standards and certification schemes to have an adequate impact. For sustainability to be achieved long-term, it needs to make sense for businesses (including consumer demand) and be scalable. It is crucial to consider options for small businesses that may not have the capacity to comply with complex and often costly certification systems. Approaches to sustainability need not solely focus on certification, but on increasing sustainability on a landscape scale, as well as using standards to improve supply chains for verification where certification is not possible.

It was suggested that to increase companies' desire to participate in wild-harvest sustainability, communication should be balanced between focusing on the 'risks' (the language they are likely familiar with internally) and emphasising the benefits of responsibly sourced wild plant ingredients, contributing to the health of the biosphere as well as the livelihoods of the harvesting communities.

Caitlin Schindler, Plants Trade Programme Manager, TRAFFIC
Launch of the We Use Wild Pledge

Following the focus on the benefits of responsible wild plants trade, the [We Use Wild Pledge](#) was launched. Businesses are encouraged to sign the Pledge to celebrate their use of wild ingredients while increasing consumer awareness and publicly declaring their commitment to responsible sourcing. The Pledge is a voluntary, self-led initiative organised by TRAFFIC. The Pledge provides an action framework, while the Wild Dozen ingredients provide a starting point (although organisations can focus on any wild ingredients most relevant to them), and the WildCheck Platform and Report provide resources on how to achieve the Pledge. Although its primary target is businesses, the Pledge is open to any organisation working or interacting with wild plant ingredients.

The procedure to sign-up is as follows:

1. Contact wildcheck@traffic.org with a brief explanation of why you would like to sign
2. Receive sign-up document and media pack
3. Submit a one-page action plan
4. Publicly announce your commitment
5. To reaffirm your commitment annually, submit a 1-2 -page annual report



4. COLLABORATION TO ADDRESS ISSUES AND EMBRACE OPPORTUNITIES: INTERACTIVE SESSION

Breakout groups were convened to address the following questions:

- What challenges, obstacles, or issues do you see in responsible harvesting/sourcing of the wild ingredients you interact with?

- How could your group come together to address these challenges or issues? What support would be needed?
- What are some specific, time-bound actions that can happen after the event?

5. NEXT STEPS: AGREED ACTIONS FOR WILD PLANT INGREDIENTS

Facilitated by **Caitlin Schindler**, Plants Trade Programme Manager, TRAFFIC, and **Gayle Burgess**, Social & Behaviour Change Programme Lead, TRAFFIC

Because the Forum was an action-oriented event aiming to conclude with concrete follow-up actions, the results from the interactive session were presented for wider group discussion on determining the next steps and key contact people for specific sectors and ingredients.

Suggestions for further action focused on four main themes, as follows.

Research and partnerships

NGOs, research and industry support organisations should:

- Create working groups focused on specific wild ingredients, or a 'co-operative' focused on wild-harvest supply chain mapping and traceability.
- Identify and share a list of experts on relevant topics (e.g. ecologists) and design collaborative approaches to training.
- Raise awareness with consumers and producers around ingredients that feature in smaller volumes (e.g. gums and resins), emphasising the biodiversity and livelihood impacts of wild harvesting.
- Make interventions on the landscape level. This could begin e.g. by identifying priority landscapes, supply chain overlaps, and the companies sourcing ingredients from those landscapes – then creating platforms for these companies to foster productive partnerships.
- Lead and support regular activities to increase the knowledge and available data on volumes and values of wild plant ingredients in trade, and fill in knowledge gaps with relevant government, business and CSO sectors.
 - o **The WildCheck Platform can aid in increasing knowledge on additional commodities and scale of trade.**
TRAFFIC aims to continue expanding

the wild ingredient information available via WildCheck. Organisations were encouraged to get in touch at wildcheck@traffic.org if there were specific ingredients they would like to see covered.

Traceability, transparency and risk

Businesses should:

- Designate an external facilitator for consortiums of companies looking at traceability for common commodities (related to the Partnerships section above).

NGOs, research and industry support organisations should:

- Publish a list of wild-harvested plant ingredients to support businesses exploring their ingredient ranges and risk exposure.
 - o The IUCN Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group (SULi) is producing guidelines on the harvesting of threatened species, including case studies – this could be of interest to the group.

Standards, certification schemes, and businesses should:

- Determine how and if certification bodies can aid transparency for businesses operating near the consumer end of the value chain.

All stakeholders should:

- Identify ways to increase pressure on investors through communications which increasingly mention the benefits of the responsible wild harvest to nature.
- Identify cooperations that can provide insights into tools such as digital payment and tracking systems, improving traceability and making better connections to the source communities.

Standards and certification harmonisation

Standards and certification schemes should:

- Showcase information about certifications that can be applied to wild ingredients through resources shared at the Forum, and explore the creation of new resources as needed – e.g. the [WildCheck Platform's Resources page](#) and the [ITC Standards Map](#).
- Identify areas of potential pre-competitive collaboration on standards and certification using ISEAL Alliance's [Framework of Interoperability](#).
 - o Certification bodies at the event discussed having a follow-on meeting to explore pre-competitive collaboration opportunities, as they all work towards a similar mission of increasing sustainably harvested ingredients.

Communications

Businesses should:

- Involve and empower local communities through every stage of trade transformation.

- Identify the factors driving change from industry leadership (e.g. climate change, disclosure policies, shareholder views) and present a compelling case for action to both businesses and investors.
- Continue to raise awareness by attending trade fairs and expo events and providing information on sustainable wild plant sourcing. Explore opportunities to collaborate with other organisations such as TRAFFIC at these events.

All stakeholders should:

- Gather and promote success stories in wild harvesting that emphasise opportunities for responsible sourcing to make the business case for sustainability. This can include case studies on harvesting communities right through to leaders of large companies/brands who are investing in responsible wild harvesting and their motivations for doing so.
- Improve communication about what individual consumers can do and the benefits of action.

6. ACTION AFTER THE FORUM

Attendees were encouraged to continue thinking of next steps, pursuing collaboration opportunities after the Forum, and sharing knowledge and contacts with their colleagues internally. Specific follow-up actions are noted in the previous section, and TRAFFIC is available to support attendees. Any organisations unable to attend the Forum but wishing to get involved are encouraged to contact wildcheck@traffic.org.

Participants and interested parties were encouraged to [sign the We Use Wild Pledge](#).

before the end of January 2023 to confirm their commitments to ensuring the wild plant ingredients they work with remain available well into the future.

TRAFFIC will continue a focused package of work on wild-harvested plant ingredients and is therefore available to support organisations' commitments, with TRAFFIC strategic priorities to 2030 including 'Enabling responsible wild supply chains' and 'Catalysing responsible consumption'.

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TRAFFIC is a leading non-governmental organisation working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

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