



environmental affairs

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Securing jobs and growth from natural resources

The business development and job creation potential of South Africa's rich biodiversity was profiled in Cape Town last week (9-13 Sept 2019) as representatives of more than 40 African countries gathered to discuss how communities can benefit from the economic utilisation of their natural resources.

Many of Africa's plant species are in high demand internationally for their health, nutrition and cosmetic benefits. This biotrade is a high-growth economic sector which is creating skilled and unskilled jobs, stimulating technology development, protecting the environment and African biodiversity, and generating valuable foreign exchange from exports.

The challenge is to ensure the harvest, processing and trade in unique plant ingredients produces fair benefits for indigenous people and local communities who have lived for generations on the land and hold traditional knowledge.

South Africa is one of the African countries which has made the most progress in enshrining benefit-sharing in its national legislative and regulatory framework. In 2013, it ratified the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits (ABS).

The 12th Pan-African Workshop on ABS included representatives of rural communities, traditional leaders, African governments, small SA businesses and global companies which use African plants in their recipes and products.

Workshop delegates got a first hand view of sustainable biotrade in action when they toured two innovative businesses in the Western Cape.

Parceval (www.parceval.co.za) grows more than 100 indigenous and exotic plant species near Wellington and processes them into cosmetic, nutrition and pharmaceutical ingredients and products for local and international customers.

Parceval has created 45 permanent jobs and established the Samara Foundation (www.samara.org.za) to support early childhood development in Eastern Cape communities.

Afriplex (www.afriplex.co.za) develops and manufactures botanical extracts, complementary medicines and food and beverage products from a large facility in Paarl. It has become a major local employer and a significant demonstration of biotrade's economic potential.

Delegates also met South African and German professors who are researching the medicinal and economic benefits of several African plant species.

The ABS workshop was hosted by SA's Department of Environment Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) (www.environment.gov.za), a national competent authority for the Nagoya Protocol on ABS.

It was arranged by the Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Capacity Development Initiative (www.abs-initiative.info), a project implemented by the German overseas development agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH with other international partners.

"We are pleased to see all parties working together to develop a common understanding of how biotrade can develop in a fair and sustainable way, enabling business growth, job creation and the sharing of benefits for people in countries with rich natural resources and valuable biodiversity," said Andreas Drews, ABS Initiative project manager.

German government support for the ABS Initiative is now in its 13th year. "We are pleased to be strengthening our collaboration with the SA government through our work with DEFF, and supporting the development of robust ABS-compliant biotrade value chains across Africa," said Christian Grün, Head of Cooperation at the German Embassy in Pretoria.

The Swiss government supports the the initiative through its State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). "Consumers internationally are seeking novel natural ingredients in their food, drinks, cosmetics and medicines," said Franziska Spörri, head of SECO's Economic Cooperation and Development in SA. "We are helping to ensure these ingredients are ethically-sourced and sustainably harvested, and that some of the benefits of the end products flow back down the value chain to communities."

ENDS

Contact:**Natalie Feltman**

Director: Bioprospecting and
Biodiversity Economy
Department of Environment,
Forestry and Fisheries
nfeltman@environment.gov.za
+27 12 399 8917 / +27 82 653 2713

Tobias Dierks

Communication
ABS Capacity Development
Initiative
tobias.dierks@giz.de
+49 151 467 53 452

Jonathon Rees

Media
ABS Capacity Development
Initiative
jonathon@proofafrica.co.za
+27 76 185 1827

Notes to editors:

- The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) is a 2010 supplementary agreement to the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity.
- South Africa's 2015 Biodiversity Economy Strategy (BES) is aligned with the National Development Plan and set an industry growth goal of 10% annually from the biodiversity economy.
- GIZ implements two biotrade and ABS-related projects in southern Africa:
 - ABS Compliant Biotrade in Souther(ern) Africa (ABioSA)
 - BioInnovation Africa

About the ABS Capacity Development Initiative

The ABS Capacity Development Initiative contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by supporting the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS, framed by the third objective of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Established in 2006, the multi-donor Initiative is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and currently funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ, host of the Initiative), the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie/Institut de la Francophonie pour le développement durable (OIF/IFDD), the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the 11th European Development Fund (through the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement) and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Cooperation (SECO). The Secretariat of the ABS Initiative is located at GIZ headquarters in Germany.