CAPACITY BUILDING FOR BIOTRADE PROJECT

UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF)
Innovative approaches to business, investment and trade policies are required to successfully address the challenges associated with fighting poverty, unemployment, and the overexploitation of natural resources leading to biodiversity loss and the rapid deterioration of ecosystem services. Promoting the commercialization of biodiversity-based products, or “biotrade” is being increasingly recognized as a means of providing incentives for the sustainable management of biodiversity while simultaneously creating employment opportunities and livelihoods.

INTRODUCTION

The project is operating in Namibia, Nepal and Peru.

Biodiversity-based business or biotrade refers to those activities of collection, production, transformation, and commercialization of goods and services derived sustainably from native biodiversity. For this project, this definition will be used with the understanding that it only includes “native” biodiversity resources, which means that only species which develop, occur naturally, or have existed in a country for many years. The meaning of “native” species thus differs from the meaning of “endemic” species, which are unique to one area/country.
The demand for many biodiversity-based products such as natural cosmetics, medicines, food and food ingredients has grown significantly and shows considerable potential for further growth. In 2002-2003, 80 per cent of new chemicals introduced globally as drugs could be traced back to or were inspired from natural sources. Profits from these developments can be significant; for example, 2006 estimates of the value of anti-cancer agents from marine organisms are up to US$ 1 billion a year.

In many instances, the supply of biodiversity-based products has failed to keep up with rising demand. At the same time, some developing countries are still unaware of the opportunities offered by biotrade, and in places where they are aware they face challenges in seizing these opportunities effectively.

At the national level, further measures are needed to raise awareness of biotrade opportunities in the private as well as in the public sector. At the international level, before gaining access to export markets, many biodiversity-based products need to comply with complex technical regulations and standards that address issues such as product safety and consumer protection.

Developing countries need support to build institutional and technical capacity for meeting these complex technical requirements and for effectively using voluntary sustainability standards as a marketing tool, including geographical indicators.

The overall objective of this project is to strengthen biotrade-related capacities in the three pilot countries. A set of national and international, interrelated and mutually supportive activities are to be carried out, involving national institutions, NGOs, local businesses, the private sector, and governments. By providing a hub for effective exchange of experiences and lessons learned, the project also promotes south-south cooperation between participating countries. This enables the replication of successful models for seizing opportunities and overcoming barriers in biotrade.
(GIs), intellectual property rights (IPRs) and access and benefit sharing (ABS) mechanisms. They also need support for more effective participation in international trade negotiations affecting biotrade, such as those on sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) and technical barriers to trade (TBT).

This initiative takes a two-pronged approach to addressing national and international challenges in promoting biotrade. The UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force (CBTF) takes the lead in implementing international level activities. The German Technical Cooperation Projects (GTZ) take the lead in implementing national level activities in three pilot countries: Namibia, Nepal and Peru. This is done in close cooperation with national multi-stakeholder task teams on environment and trade. In Namibia, they work under the Namibia Trade Forum and are endorsed by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. In Peru, they work with the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism. In Nepal, they work with the Ministry of Commerce and Supplies, and the Ministry of Forestry and Soil Conservation.

**Outputs**

The following outputs are being produced through the international level activities:

- A manual on biotrade which includes a reference guide on regulations and negotiations on selected issues such as SPS, TBT, ABS, IPRs, and GIs;
- Three country studies on Biotrade: A Catalyst for Transitioning to a Green Economy;
- Capacity building material that identifies barriers to biotrade and how to overcome them; and
- A study to assess markets for biotrade products and options for adding value through the use of existing standards and labels, trademarks and GIs.
CBTF is a collaborative initiative between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) that provides support to countries on issues related to trade and environment in pursuit of national sustainable development and poverty reduction goals. CBTF has a history of providing capacity building support to countries.

The national level activities of this project are implemented through GTZ Programmes: the “Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Management Project” in Namibia; the “Programa Desarrollo Rural Sostenible (Sustainable Rural Development Programme)” in Peru; and the “Inclusive Development of the Economy Programme (INCLUDE)” in Nepal.

The International Trade Centre (ITC) offers assistance to businesses in developing countries with the aim of helping these countries achieve sustainable development through exports.

CITES aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants is legal, sustainable and traceable.

CBD’s objectives are to conserve biological diversity, to use components of biological diversity in a sustainable manner and to share the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources fairly and equitably.

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Biodiversity-based products, including spices, are used for medicinal and cosmetic, as well as culinary purposes. Pictures: star anise (front page), scented oils, spa treatment, honey (inner pages), and herbal tablets (back page). Sources: GTZ, Stock.xchng, and 123RF.