

Wild Collection: Approaches of Ecological Sustainability and Social Responsibility

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Abstract

Medicinal and aromatic plants (MAP) harvested from natural populations continue to be the most important source of medicine to cover the primary health care needs of more than two thirds of the world's human population. With increasing demand for MAP, over-harvesting, and other threats to wild MAP populations, the development of effective tools ensuring the sustainable use of MAP has gained momentum in recent years. Besides the general framework provided by the 1993 WHO/IUCN/WWF Guidelines on the Conservation of Medicinal Plants, which is currently under revision, two specific sustainability standards have become available recently: the ISSC-MAP and the FairWild standards. The ISSC-MAP centers around ecological sustainability criteria, but considers social and economic parameters as well. FairWild aims to provide a standard with a strong social focus. It combines ISSC-MAP principles with FairTrade and International Workers' Rights elements. Both standards have now entered their first implementation phase. The Institute for Marketecology (IMO) was involved in the development of both standards. and is at the forefront of implementing them in its capacity as certification body. First results from pilot implementation operations are expected for 2008 / 2009. ISSC-MAP and FairWild Standards have the potential to gain considerable market power within the next couple of years.

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