

Breaking News on Supplements & Nutrition - Europe

Previous page : [African plant initiative enters next stage, seeks support](#)

African plant initiative enters next stage, seeks support

By Jess Halliday

17/10/2006- **A major project to boost standards in African medicinal plants and spur European trade has yielded its first results, but more support is sought to ensure its long-term survival.**

Professor Kobus Eloff, chairman of the board of The Association for African Medicinal Plant Standards (AAMPS), told NutraIngredients.com that 29.8 per cent of the world's plant species originate from sub-Saharan Africa, yet they account for less than 5 per cent of the medicinal plant market in Europe.

While European supplement and herbal product manufacturers are eager to innovate and introduce new products to the marketplace, they are operating in a tough regulatory environment. More than ever there is a need to demonstrate quality, efficacy and safety in the interests of consumer protection and for the reputation of the industry at large.

Thus, the aim of AAMPS is to develop and promote quality assurance and trading standards. Prof Eloff said that the plant profiles are intended *"to encourage trade in medicinal plants, and encourage job creation across Africa."*

To date, the first 28 of 53 profiles have been drawn up, but Prof Eloff said that funding issues are standing in the way of completion and publication.

The plan to compile an African Pharmacopoeia was first announced in 2005. In May of that year a meeting of African herbal medicine experts from 14 countries was held, at which AAMPS was formed and the most important African plants were discussed.

At a meeting held three weeks ago AAMPS board members discussed continuing funding in order to publish a first edition of the database in hard form - print and CDROM.

An application is presently being made to ProInvest. Financial supporters so far have included the ACP-EU Centre for Development and Enterprise and the ACP-EU Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Co-Operation.

There has been some debate amongst members as to whether publication should be made in hard form while there is still some research ongoing. An interim solution is in the AAMPS' 'living database', giving members online access to the current state of play.

Prof Kobus said that the association is also seeking more industry partners. In the area of quality assurance, one key initiative planned is the establishment of regional accredited laboratories. The model would be that growers and exporters would pay a percentage of export revenue on raw material that receives accreditation.

Denzil Philips, technical advisor to AAMPS, told NutraIngredients.com that figures for the African medicinal plants market are notoriously inaccurate. However he said that in the German herbal medicines market African Geranium (Umckaloabo) and Devils Claw are in the top 20 most popular products, with combined sales of well over €20m. euros. Other key African sourced products are Rioobos and Honeybush teas, and Prunus Africana (all with multi million dollar sales), as well as Griffonia, Centella asiatica and Kigelia. In skin care, Shea Butter is a hugely popular ingredient.

Drawing up the profiles involves asking two fundamental questions: What are the plants used for?; and what work has been done already?

The first step is to bring together all the information published on a particular plant to date. This information is evaluated for probably safety and efficacy, and any gaps in the knowledge are identified. This can help researchers to pinpoint areas for future funding applications.

The profiles can also help ensure that the right part of a plant is used, through HDLC (high density liquid chromatography) of the extract, and an infrared scan of the powder. For more

information, please visit www.aamps.org

Copyright - Unless otherwise stated all contents of this web site are © 2000/2008 – Decision News Media SAS – All Rights Reserved. For permission to reproduce any contents of this web site, please email our Syndication department: [contact our Syndication department](#). Full details for the use of materials on this site can be found in the [Terms & Conditions](#).

[contact the editor](#)

[Print](#)