Darwin project 2016 achieves FairWild certification for two target species, the first FairWild certified species in all of India

The project focus on the collection and processing of the fruit of two endemic species (*Terminalia bellirica* and *T. chebula*), which are ingredients of Triphala, one of the most important Ayurvedic preparations, has just FairWild certification at its two sites in India. This success provides an example of how a market tool can provide a key facilitating mechanism in precipitating positive conservation outcomes through the improvement of livelihoods. The example of FairTrade has demonstrated how certification can provide a means of securing market access and adding value to resources. It also offers potential for encouraging wider community ownership, building capacity, ensuring a more equitable distribution of benefits, and providing an educational tool for developing understandings of the nature, value and proper utilisation of these resources. FairWild certification is that more rigorous, as it provides specific guidance on sustainability of wild harvesting and trade. The certification of *T. bellirica* and *T. chebula* has been achieved through a carefully developed programme of training and supply chain development as part of a project initiated by our partner organisation, the Applied Environmental Resource Foundation (AERF), working with rural communities in the Western Ghats, a global biodiversity hotspot. It has been designed and implemented in partnership with us at DICE, in the School of Anthropology and Conservation, at the University of Kent, and Pukka Herbs Ltd. UK, with additional funding support provided through a joint TRAFFIC-AERF initiative supported by the Keidanran Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF).

AERF identified candidate project sites in 2011 and established good relationships with key members of the local communities. These communities are of Mahadev Koli tribal people living in the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary in the North Western Ghats, and, 400 km further south, marginal farmers in the Sangameshwar block of Ratnagiri District. Both groups were lacking sustainable harvesting skills and market access, hence limiting their range of economic opportunities. The project carried out accurate resource assessments of *T. bellirica* (primarily within sacred groves in the south), and of *T. chebula* (in large wild groves in the north), and developed and purchased equipment for the drying and processing of fruits. This has enabled considerable value to be added to the front end of the supply chain. However, it has been in pursuing FairWild certification that perhaps the most important aspects of the project have been achieved to date. Partners engaged in a careful process of consultation and discussion with collectors and buyers of product, designed local access and benefit-sharing agreements, and helped set up organisations to oversee the implementation of these agreements: e.g. local committees of registered collectors and knowledge holders. We also formulated and delivered a training programme for those engaged in collection and processing, and set up a company, Nature Connect, run by AERF, to co-ordinate the trade and business relations, promote the products, and develop the business plans. A long-term purchase agreement now has been secured between Nature Connect and Pukka Herbs Ltd, which includes the provision of the guaranteed payment of a premium price, and Nature Connect, in turn, has entered into a long-term purchase contracts with collectors from both sites.

Dr. Ian Bride and Dr. Joseph Tzanopoulos, from DICE, were able to see the results of all this hard work when they visited the project sites in late February 2015, when the *T. bellirica* harvest was just getting under way.

The first FairWild labelled Triphala products are expected to be marketed by Pukka in the UK later in 2015, whilst the project was key in Pukka Herbs winning the prestigious 2degrees Champions Sustainability Awards 2014 in July 2014. Project partners are now further extending the work into exploring the potential for the sustainable harvesting and trade in other medicinal plant species, including *Tinospora cordifolia*, which is used to treat a wide range of ailments including Type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, gout, rheumatoid arthritis, lymphoma, allergies, and peptic ulcers.

The approach employed on this project, utilising the FairWild certification process to build on collaborative dialogue and collaboration between stakeholders in order to create a complete and reasonably robust

supply chain, offers considerable promise for the conservation of these tree species, their habitats, and the associated biological diversity. For example, of 33 nests of the Great Pied Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*) and Malabar Pied Hornbill (*Anthracoceros coronatus*) recorded in one of the project site areas, 23 are located in *T. bellirica* hollows. Hornbills are well-known as seed dispersers of numerous rare species such as *Antiaris toxicaria*, *Strycnus nuxvomica*, and, because the *T. bellirica* fruit are gathered by a passive net collection method, the livelihood benefits accruing to the local communities do not conflict with the existence of these birds, whilst also respecting the traditional conservation practice of sacred groves. The cutting of these massive trees to provide structural timbers and firewood, practiced widely in recent times, most certainly does.

The sustainable natural resource utilization model described here will hopefully enable other species to be brought into value chains in a manner that further supports people who are amongst some of the most vulnerable in the modern world and ensures the sustainability of wild-harvesting. Of course, what has been achieved so far would have been possible neither without significant project funding the Darwin Initiative and KNCF, nor the commitment and contributions by the project partners and the communities themselves.

Dr. Ian Bride, Prof. Douglas MacMillan, Dr. Joseph Tzanopoulos (DICE), Mr. Jayant Sarnaik, Dr. Archana Godbole (AERF), Mr. Ben Heron, Mr. Sebastian Pole (Pukka Herbs)

Pictures

Terminalia chebula processing facility at Dhagewadi Village, Bhimashankar

AERF Darwin Project Manager, Jayant Sarnaik, with the first *T. chebula* harvest under the Darwin project

The dried fruit de-stoning and sorting machines are giving a ritual blessing

Passive collection of *Terminalia bellirica* fruit, in Kosumb Sacred Grove, Sangameshwar (with temple in background)

Great Pied Hornbills in courtship ritual on giant *T. bellirica* nesting tree, Kosumb Sacred Grove (S. Pole)