



INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY DAY

# Africa's wild harvests boost global beauty

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THE theme of this year's International Biodiversity Day (May 22) is "acting locally for global impact". It aims to highlight "that success in halting and reversing biodiversity loss hinges on the world's ability to leverage the vital tapestry of local action".

A key but often unrecognised part of this local action is the harvesting and trade of wild species for human benefit. These local actions are directly contributing to Targets 5 and 9 of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) on the sustainable use of wild species, and indirectly to targets on area-based conservation, business, and finance.

Less widely known but nevertheless having a global impact is the harvesting of wild species across Africa for the cosmetics industry. From baobab to marula to shea, these species generate income and support rural livelihoods. However, the unsung heroes are the companies that enable this trade connecting African landscapes to the global cosmetics industry.

At this year's edition of the industry's trade show – in-cosmetics Global – which took place last month in Paris, there were at least 18 exhibitors of wild-harvested ingredients from across Africa, including suppliers from Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Somalia, South Africa,

and Zimbabwe. These companies are champions of local action for global biodiversity impact. Here is a selection of six African companies sourcing locally and selling globally:

**Bubune Africa** (Ghana) specialises in raw, authentic African ingredients, including shea, cocoa butter, neem oil, baobab oil, and moringa oil. In northern Ghana, they partner with women-led cooperatives groups to ensure sustainable and inclusive sourcing. Applications include haircare, skincare, and baby and child-specific products.

**African Agency for Arid Resources Limited** (Kenya) is a producer and exporter of wild cosmetic ingredients from East Africa, including the essential oils of baobab, frankincense, and myrrh. The company is committed to sustainable sourcing and ethical bi-trade (the sustainable trade of natural products). Their products are used in haircare, perfumes, fragrances, and skincare applications.

**Namib Desert Oils** (Namibia) collaborates with local communities to source of natural oils for the cosmetic industry, including Kalahari melon, mongongo, marula and !Nara oils. The latter (pronounced with a click for the !) is a thorny creeper that grows along the Atlantic coastal desert. The oils extracted from its seeds can help to treat sensitive skin conditions.

**Younis Aroma Ltd** (Somalia) is based in northern Puntland where it specialises in harvesting and processing boswellia frankincense resin and commiphora myrrh resin – natural aromatic gums or saps. The extracted oils are used for a wide variety of applications, including fragrances, toiletries, baby and child products, pet care, and colour cosmetics. The company's slogan is "where nature, community, and commerce grow together".

**Sphile Holdings cc** (South Africa) offers an innovative animal-based bio-active oil called Vuyotide. This cosmetic ingredient is sustainably sourced from mopane worms – a large edible caterpillar that feeds mainly on the leaves of the mopane tree. Its fatty acids, vitamins, and natural antioxidants can be used in serums, creams, lotions, and hair oils. As a new exhibitor, they were looking for distributors in the Americas and Europe.

**Kaza Natural Oils** (Zimbabwe) positions itself as a southern African endemic ingredient manufacturer promoting the Big 5 among trees for cosmetics – baobab, Kalahari melon, marula, mongongo, and ximenia – "where tradition beauty secrets, science, conservation of biodiversity and rural empowerment converge".

At in-cosmetics Global, they were specifically looking for distributors in China for their plant extracts, botani-

cal, essential oils, and aromatic oils.

Three of these companies – Kaza Natural Oils, Namib Desert Oils, and Younis Aroma – have FairWild certification, which assures global buyers and consumers that local collection practices are ecologically sustainable, socially fair, and commercially responsible. As evidenced by the growing interest in FairWild certification at the trade show, the global cosmetics industry is increasingly demanding traceable wild-harvested ingredients that contribute to biodiversity conservation and community empowerment.

Through responsible sourcing, ingredient value chains of the cosmetics industry directly contribute to GBF Targets 5 and 9 by ensuring that the management, harvesting, use, and trade of African wild species are sustainable, legal, and beneficial to people globally.

This speaks to the opportunities that in this year's International Biodiversity Day highlights for governments across Africa to create enabling environments that are conducive to inclusive and meaningful participation of local communities in the harvesting and use of wild species for global industries such as cosmetics.

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