



**UEBT**  
SOURCING<sup>®</sup>  
WITH RESPECT



SOURCING  
BOTANICALS  
WITH RESPECT  
FOR PEOPLE AND  
BIODIVERSITY

**OCTOBER 2022**



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<sup>1</sup>Sections include new data from UEBT not published before

## WHO IS THIS DOCUMENT FOR?

The document provides guidance on trends and good practices for companies sourcing botanicals for use in food, beverages, fragrance compositions, cosmetics, and a range of other sectors.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Biodiversity is high on the corporate agenda and the loss of biodiversity is a significant concern among consumers<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, a new global framework on biodiversity is set to galvanise action across public and private sectors<sup>2</sup>.

Companies are working to understand and measure the impact and dependencies on biodiversity. Targets are set and action is underway to ensure supply chains do not involve deforestation or human rights violations. Increasingly, companies are also looking at how their raw materials and supply chains can contribute to restoring nature and improving livelihoods.

Botanicals, biodiversity-derived raw materials used as strategic ingredients in high-value sectors from natural pharmaceutical and flavor and fragrance to beauty, and herbs and spices, are an essential part of the biodiversity agenda.

UEBT research shows:

- the high biodiversity importance of botanicals and the ecosystems in they grow,
- their key role in the livelihoods of local and often marginalized people around the world, and
- the remaining biodiversity risks and challenges in botanicals, coupled with opportunities for positive impact.

A UEBT review of more than 100 botanical supply chains around the globe reveals that insufficient attention is paid to biodiversity in sourcing practices. For example, agrochemicals are often misused, waste is poorly managed, and the links with surrounding landscapes are ignored. In addition, farmers' and pickers' pay is often too low to ensure good practices or provide a living income.

This review, based on local assessments conducted by UEBT and its member companies, shows that assessing practices on the ground and developing improvement plans jointly among supply chain stakeholders, stimulates positive change. Sourcing practices get better and the relationship between people and biodiversity improves. Botanical supply chains prove to have significant potential as a driver of sustainable development.

Botanical supply chains prove to have significant potential as a driver of sustainable development

Botanicals provide a compelling and strategic opportunity for companies to act on biodiversity. Companies can take steps to elevate the importance of botanicals in their biodiversity and sourcing strategies.

More attention and investment is needed to address risks and harness opportunities for people and biodiversity along botanical supply chains.

Plants, oils, extracts, and other biodiversity-derived raw materials have long offered unique stories and benefits to products. This is now a chance to further enhance their contributions by linking them even more to people and biodiversity.

<sup>1</sup> UEBT Biodiversity Barometer 2022

<sup>2</sup> The UN Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to be adopted at the UN Conference of the Parties (COP 15) in Montreal, Canada, December 2022

Lavender being grown in France | Image courtesy of UEBT

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## THE BIODIVERSITY AWAKENING

Business knows that its customers, including end consumers, are growing more and more aware of the biodiversity crisis. According to UEBT's 2022 consumer research that surveyed 6,000 consumers across six countries<sup>1</sup>, **loss of biodiversity was the second most important global environmental issue of concern, after climate change.**

The research also showed a high level of understanding of what biodiversity is. 87% of consumers surveyed had heard of the term 'biodiversity' and 82% could select the correct definition of biodiversity.

This is part of a longer-term trend. **In the last 2 years, biodiversity awareness has considerably increased, and significant progress has been made since 2009.**

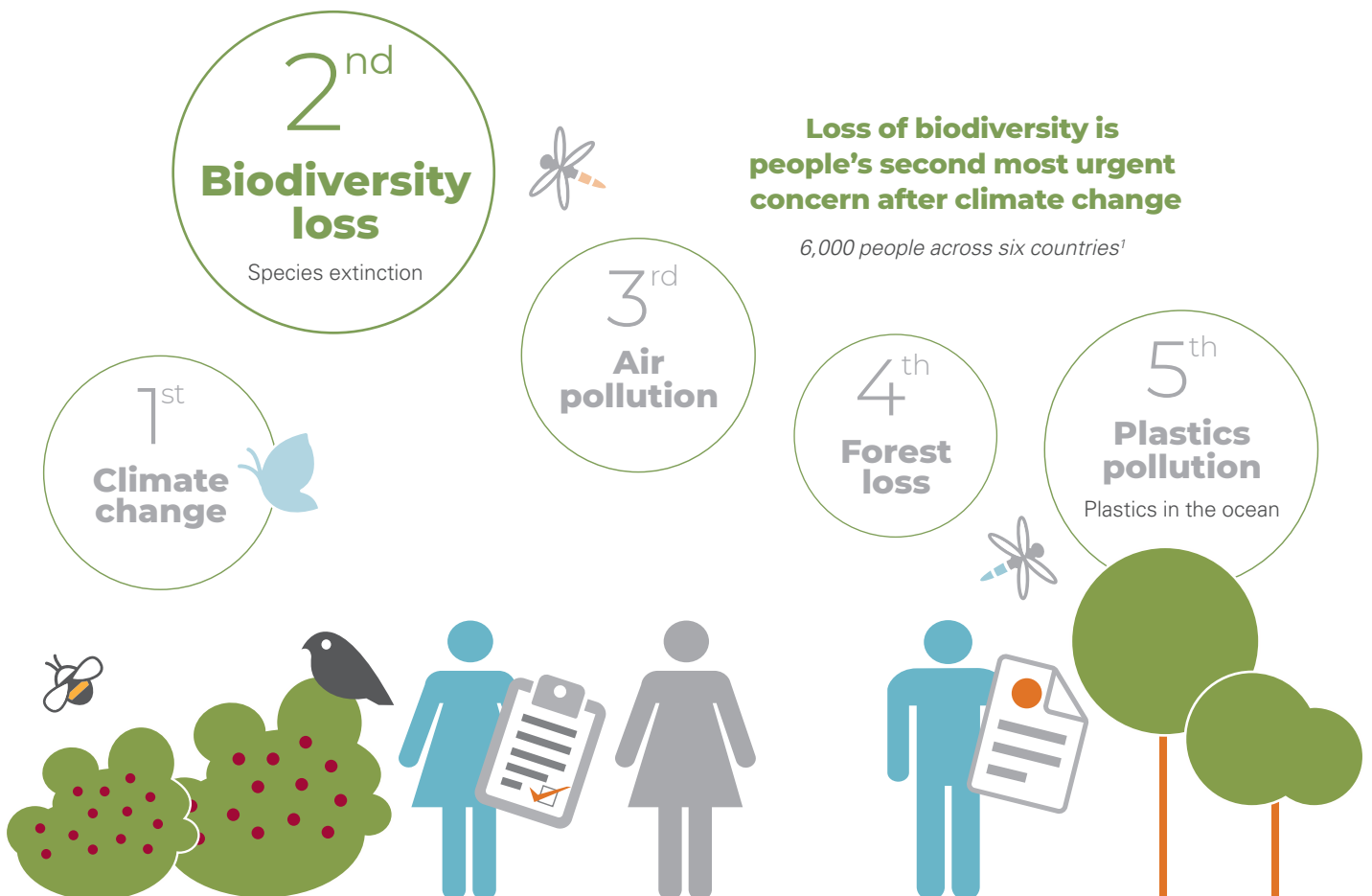
### CONSUMERS WANT INFORMATION ON HOW BUSINESS IS RESPECTING BIODIVERSITY

82% of those surveyed said they would like companies to inform them about the actions they take to respect biodiversity and people, but **only 57% said they feel confident that companies are paying serious attention to sourcing with respect for biodiversity.**

86% of those surveyed said it was important to them to have information on a product's impact on biodiversity

Clearly biodiversity is of significant interest to consumers. **In fact, 86% of those surveyed said it was important to them to have information on a product's impact on biodiversity listed on the product package or product web page,** only slightly lower in importance than the list of ingredients.

<sup>1</sup> US, UK, Germany, France, Brazil and China



## REGULATION IS ON THE RISE, AND ALL EYES ARE ON THE GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Policymakers are also clearly concerned, as shown by developments at international, regional, and national levels. In 2021, the United Nations Secretary General noted that “biodiversity is collapsing—and we are the losers”. He said the world is counting on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, now likely to be adopted in December 2022 in Montreal, to transform humanity’s relationship with nature, and fully reflect the value of biodiversity, including to the global economy.

The adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is expected to galvanize urgent action to stabilize biodiversity loss by 2030 and allow for its regeneration by 2050. Often compared in importance to the 2015 *Paris Agreement* related to climate, this global framework for biodiversity sets targets on protected areas, pesticides, wild species, agriculture, fair and equitable benefit sharing, business reporting on biodiversity dependencies and impacts, and more. Indicators will be established for countries and other stakeholders to report on progress.

As a result, this is an opportunity for business to align with its goals and to contribute to its targets, signaling support for what may become the clear beacon for nature worldwide. Business is already engaging in the process and raising its voice to advocate for ambitious global targets, including through initiatives such as *Business for Nature*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> UEBT is a member of the business action working group of Business for Nature.

### Box 1

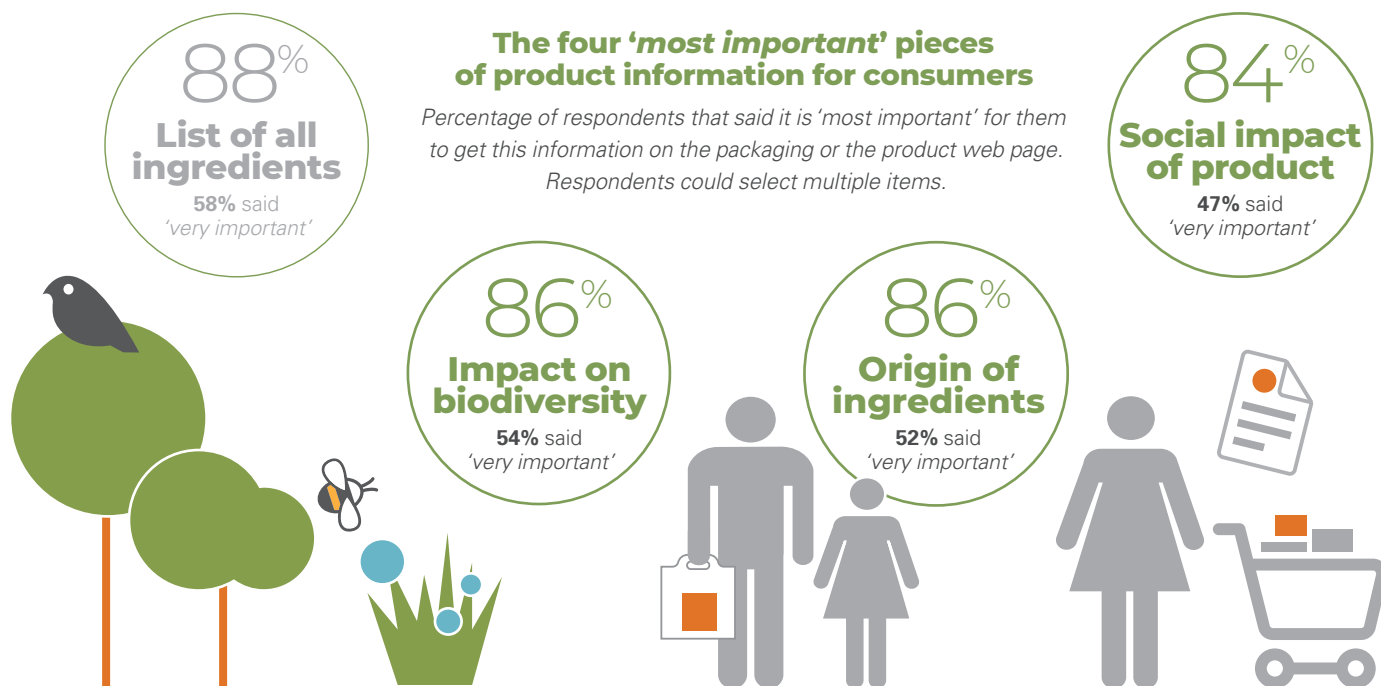
#### Rise in due diligence regulation will stimulate action on biodiversity

Sourcing with respect for biodiversity has additional benefits for business, through supporting compliance with the growing number of legal frameworks that seek to ensure that companies carry out due diligence along their supply chains. These include the European Commission proposal for a directive on human rights and environmental due diligence (proposal issued in 2022), and the German supply chain due diligence act (enters into force in 2023).

See a summary of these in the Annex.

At the regional level, key policy developments include the European Green Deal launched in 2020 with the aim to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent. As part of this, the European Commission has proposed new rules on deforestation and waste and presented a new soil strategy. The European Commission is also proposing a directive on human rights and environmental due diligence. At the national level, a number of countries are adopting or strengthening their own due diligence requirements. As biodiversity-related rules and policy continue to evolve, companies will need to be aware and ensure they are complying, where required, and aligning wherever possible.

See the Annex for a table summarizing key policy developments, with links and how business could engage.



## 2 THE IMPORTANCE OF BOTANICALS FOR BIODIVERSITY AND PEOPLE

Botanicals are sourced by a diverse array of companies in the cosmetics, functional foods, natural pharmaceuticals, personal care, fragrances and flavour, and herbs and spices sectors, among others.

They are found in sports and soft drinks, table spices, energy bars, lipsticks, skin care products, perfumes, dietary supplements, herbals teas, and much more.

### THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT REASONS FOR INCLUDING BOTANICALS IN RESPONSIBLE SOURCING STRATEGIES

Botanicals are some of the most evocative and interesting raw materials used in the world.

Companies need to include botanicals in their responsible sourcing strategies for a few clear reasons.





These include **2.1** high levels of biodiversity in these supply chains, **2.2** significant reliance of local people on botanicals, and – paradoxically considering the high biodiversity found in them – **2.3** significant challenges needing improvement in these supply chains.

## Box 2

### What do we mean by botanicals?

UEBT defines **botanicals** broadly, including plants and other unique raw materials derived from biodiversity. That is, we use the term to cover plant parts – such as roots, flowers, fruits – or other material or compounds from animals, fungi, or microbial organisms.

These ingredients may be used as herbs and spices or in compositions and ingredients used for medicinal, flavor, fragrance, dietary, cosmetic, or other purposes. We distinguish botanicals from **commodities**, which also derive from nature but are grown and traded in large scale, often interchangeably.



## 2.1 High biodiversity importance

The number of botanicals in use has been estimated in the range of 50,000 to 70,000. This is more than 10% of the plant species documented worldwide<sup>1</sup>. In commodity agriculture, a limited number of species are relied on, eroding biodiversity. However, in sectors that rely on botanicals, there is often a larger range of plant species used, growing in different ecosystems around the world. These botanicals are linked to their ecosystem as well as to the cultures and livelihoods of the local communities that rely on them.

Botanicals are also often collected in the wild. This means botanicals are at the heart of many well-functioning ecosystems, and good sourcing practices can have a positive impact on the entire ecosystem. Working with botanicals can offer opportunities to generate positive impact and to act in ecosystems and upon species of high ecological relevance.

### Box 3

#### Why are botanicals often left out of sustainability strategies that are tackling biodiversity?

Companies are often focused on larger-scale agricultural commodities with significant negative pressure on land and water.

This work is crucial but it means that sometimes companies do not take enough action on the other tens of thousands of plant-based raw materials. These botanicals are important for specific ecosystems and local communities and many of them are endemic or threatened.

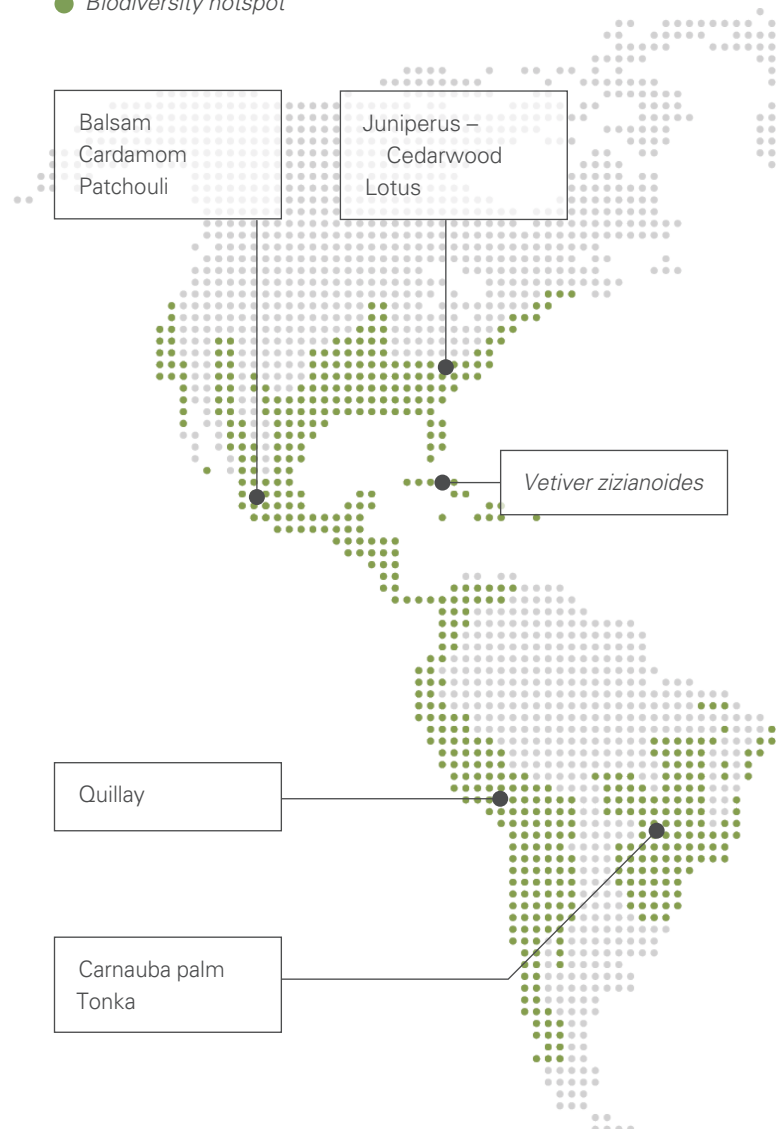
Botanicals are often produced in places rich in biodiversity. Figure 1 (below) shows known biodiversity hotspots in the world with UEBT's own information on where botanicals are sourced by UEBT member companies.

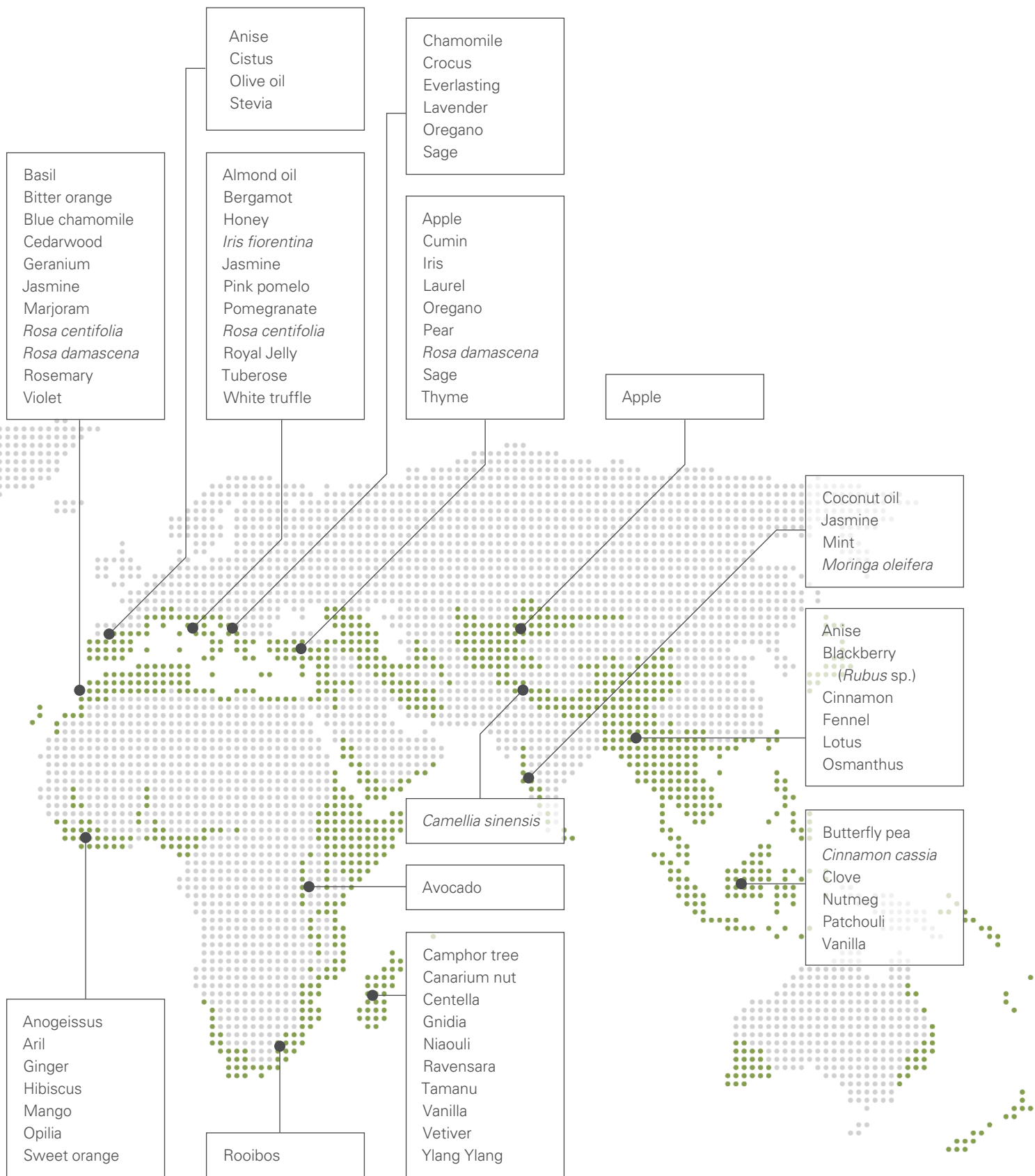
This demonstrates that sourcing of botanicals can support the maintenance of a high degree of natural biodiversity by ensuring sustainable management of sourced species and measures to conserve and enhance biodiversity in surrounding areas.

<sup>1</sup> Schippmann et al. 2006

**Figure 1** Botanicals sourcing and biodiversity hotspots

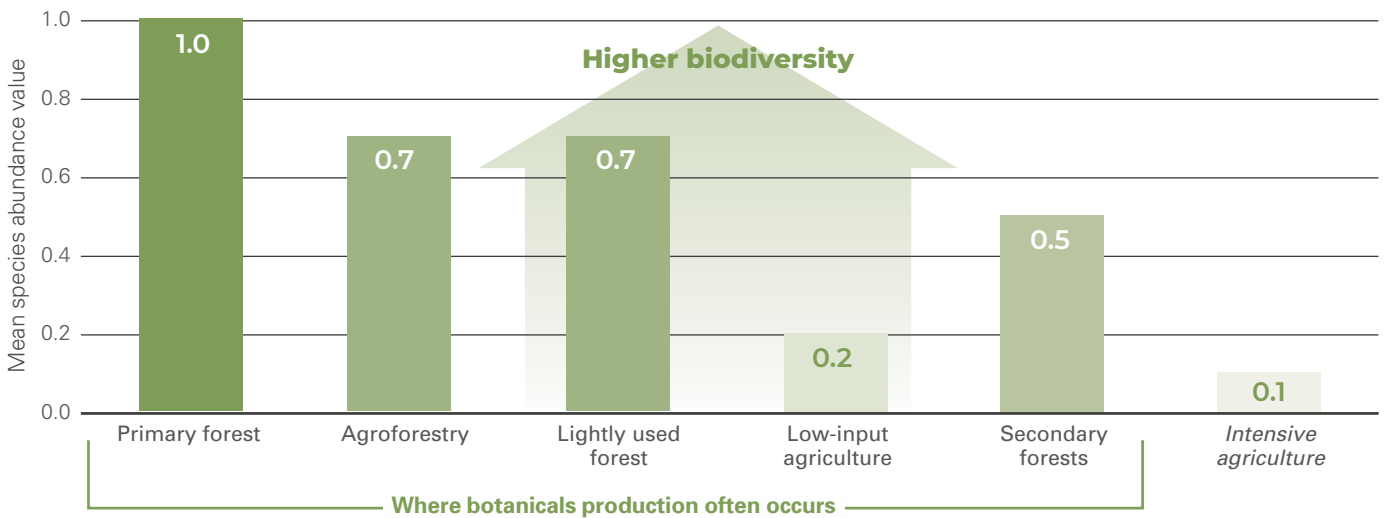
● Biodiversity hotspot





Source: Map of biodiversity hotspots adapted from Conservation International. Botanicals sourcing map from UEBT membership (100 companies, Sep 22 figures)

**Figure 2** Abundance of original species in land use categories where botanicals are grown



Source: Mean abundance of original species value for land use category (Rob Alkemade, Mark van Oorschot, Lera Miles, Christian Nellemann, Michel Bakkenes, and Ben ten Brink, 2009 GLOBIOS: A Framework to Investigate Options for Reducing Global Terrestrial Biodiversity Loss)

Working with botanicals can offer opportunities to generate positive impact and to act in ecosystems and upon species of high ecological relevance. At the same time the work with botanicals allows tackling issues that, even if not having the same scale as those found in larger commodities, are threatening biodiversity nonetheless and are negatively affecting the resilience and profitability of many sectors, including many small and medium enterprises in sourcing areas that rely on botanicals. (See section 3 on page 16 about challenges and opportunities.)

The abundance of diverse original species is significantly higher in agroforestry than that of intensive agricultural settings

Botanicals are also produced in ecosystems that are not intact anymore and have been changing over time due to farming, among other economic activities. This is when botanicals are produced in farming landscapes in Europe, North America and similar.

In both intact and non-intact ecosystems, ethical sourcing of botanicals in these areas contributes to:

- sustainable use of relevant and highly diverse species,
- maintenance of soil conditions and functions, and
- maintenance of the water cycle.

The production of most botanicals follows practices that are embedded in the natural environment and usually small in scale.

**Two-thirds of botanicals are being sourced from the wild, and relatively few of the remaining one-third that are farmed, are farmed on a large-scale<sup>1</sup>**

Botanicals are largely shade tolerant, because they often grow spontaneously under forest cover. So, when farmed, this often takes place in some form of agro-ecological system, supporting healthy soil, water conditions and its cycle. What botanicals have in common in their most common production systems are that:

- **They have a high degree of natural biodiversity**, especially in terms of original species abundance (species that would only be in place in case of no human intervention) and therefore are sometimes close to 'intact' status. This is significantly higher than more intensive agricultural systems such as where larger-scale commodities are grown<sup>2</sup> (see figure 2 above.)
- **They ensure good soil and water conditions** due to their focus on higher diversity of crop rotation, minimum tillage of the soil, more direct seeding, and higher efficiency in water use<sup>3</sup>.

Promoting sustainable sourcing of botanicals promotes working with production systems that mimic natural ecosystems and ensure high levels of on-site biodiversity and good conditions of natural resources. Sometimes botanicals grow in larger and more intensive farming systems and, in those cases, ethical sourcing can provide many positive impacts such as restoring the more natural production environment that is typical of those plants.

<sup>1</sup> Canter 2005, Schippmann 2002

<sup>2</sup> From figures on farmland biodiversity from semi-natural systems to intensive agriculture systems in, ECA 2019

<sup>3</sup> Mitchel et al, 2018

## 2.2 Botanicals support local livelihoods

Production of botanicals is crucial for the livelihoods of local communities. Although botanicals are also produced in more developed contexts and by industrial farmers, local people in lower-income countries rely especially on botanicals for food, cash, medicine, and more. Promoting ethical sourcing of those plants contributes to sustainable and resilient communities.

Botanicals provide valuable income for many rural households, especially in lower income countries, and botanicals are important in many local economies<sup>1</sup>. The production and trade of botanicals can also play a vital role in income diversification for marginalized populations living in remote areas, especially when they are connected to quality markets (such as found in ethical sourcing schemes). Income from botanicals is also an incentive for the conservation and sustainable use of forests and other ecosystems in which plant species grow.

While many of these markets for botanicals are not yet delivering fair prices or price premiums for products (*see Box 4*), they are generally more stable markets than other crop's markets that are influenced by quantity more than quality. In addition, for some rural communities, botanicals are often the only cash income option<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, about 80% of the population of most lower income countries still use traditional medicines derived from botanicals to treat human diseases<sup>3</sup>. Ensuring ethical sourcing of botanicals can support local people's health, while also protecting and valuing their traditional knowledge. It is an important tool for fair and equitable benefit sharing.

<sup>1</sup> Schippmann et al. 2006, Barata et al. 2016

<sup>2</sup> Woda, 2022

<sup>3</sup> de Silva, 1997

### Box 4

#### Conditions in botanicals production are often informal and need improvement

The cultivation and wild collection of botanicals is often carried out by small producers who lack the political or economic power to influence supply chains in such a way as to secure the rights of access to and use of resources and fair share of benefits from this use.

In addition, botanicals and derived products are often sold to quality markets that can generate high value. However, benefits have often been for large scale operations downstream in the supply chain and not for producers, including indigenous peoples and local communities.

Source: Fromentin et al, 2022; Woda, 2022

A village in Vietnam where people live that collect ingredients for the perfume sector | Image courtesy of UEBT



A village in Madagascar where women live that collect *Centella Asiatica* for the beauty sector | Image courtesy of UEBT

## 2.3 There are significant challenges to address, and opportunities for positive impact

In 2022, UEBT analyzed the results of more than 100 field-based assessments of more than 80 different botanicals. These were in supply chains where UEBT experts or external UEBT-accredited auditors visited the sourcing area (the farm or wild collection area) and observed the sourcing activities (cultivation or wild collection) and interviewed business stakeholders, including producers and workers, as well as any field collectors (pickers) about the conditions for both biodiversity and people<sup>1</sup>.

In 2022, UEBT analyzed the results of more than 100 field-based assessments of over 80 different botanicals

The challenges found are based on *where requirements of the UEBT standard were **not** reached in the assessment.*

The most frequently occurring areas for improvement were:

- Insufficient attention paid to biodiversity
- Overuse or misuse of agrochemicals
- Unfair pay

*Details on these are described in section 3.*

<sup>1</sup> UEBT assessments also often look at other local entities in the supply chain, such as local warehouses, processing operations, and similar. The primary focus, however, is on the cultivation and wild collection practices.

<sup>2</sup> The UEBT Standard is published in six languages, and available to download at [uebt.org/resource-pages/standard](https://uebt.org/resource-pages/standard)

## Box 5

### The UEBT Standard

The UEBT Standard<sup>2</sup> is a blueprint for ethical sourcing of botanicals. Its focus is on sourcing with respect for people and biodiversity.

Requirements include:

#### Respect for biodiversity

- Biodiversity conservation and restoration
- Cultivation and wild collection practices for sustainable use of biodiversity

#### Respect for people

- Human and worker's rights
- Community wellbeing and local development



# 3 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVED SOURCING OF BOTANICALS

UEBT draws the lessons in this section from the work it does with member and partner companies of all sizes across several sectors such as food and beverage, pharmaceutical, beauty, fragrance and flavors, herbs and spices, and more. Member companies commit to integrating the UEBT standard across their activities and supply chains.

UEBT members prioritize certain botanicals supply chains, where actions are taken to advance more quickly on sourcing with respect for people and biodiversity.

As part of this, some, but not all, UEBT members also request verification and certification assessments in one or more of these prioritized supply chains. The data analysed here comes from these voluntary assessments. UEBT member and partner companies use assessments to then set plans for continuous improvement.

**In this review, UEBT experts and auditors from UEBT-accredited certification bodies looked at more than 100 supply chains of over 80 different botanicals over a period of four years**

## Box 6

### Some botanicals in the analysis

- Aloe Vera
- Apple
- Arnica
- Cardamom
- Carnauba
- Centella
- Cinnamon
- Clove
- Coconut oil
- Fennel
- Hibiscus
- Jasmine
- Lavender
- Lemon balm
- Lotus
- Pink pomelo
- Rose
- Rose hip
- Sage
- Shea nut
- Spearmint
- Stevia
- Tonka beans
- Vanilla
- White truffle

### Some countries in the analysis

- Albania
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Burkina Faso
- Chile
- China
- Egypt
- France
- Ghana
- Greece
- Guatemala
- India
- Indonesia
- Italy
- Kyrgyzstan
- Lesotho
- Madagascar
- Mexico
- Morocco
- Romania
- US
- Vietnam

Everlasting (*Immortelle* ou *Helichrysum italicum*), cultivated in Croatia and used for essential oils | Image courtesy of UEBT



## THE MAIN CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### 3.1 Insufficient attention paid to biodiversity

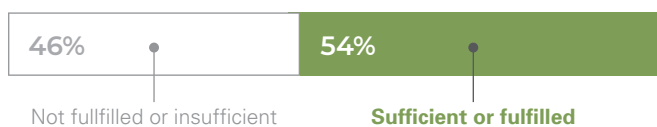
On biodiversity, more specifically UEBT found that:

- Biodiversity is not assessed at all, or the assessment needs to be improved (see figure 3.1)
- If biodiversity actions are taken, they are not monitored (see figure 3.2)
- The regeneration of wild collected botanicals and the impact of collection activities is not a focus (see figure 4)

**Figure 3** Conservation of Biodiversity | Supply chains reviewed (%)<sup>1</sup>

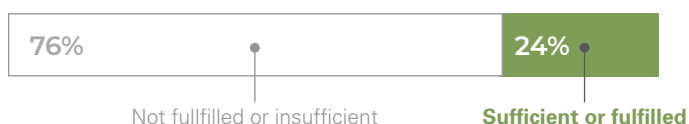
#### Figure 3.1 Information gathered

Information is gathered on the ecosystem the botanicals are produced in



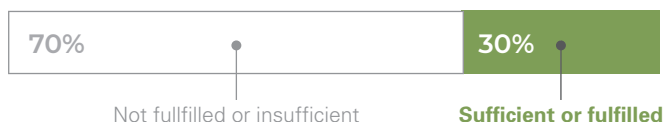
#### Figure 3.2 Targets are set and monitored

Targets are set to support maintaining ecosystems where botanicals are produced, progress is measured



**Figure 4** Regeneration | Supply chains reviewed (%)<sup>1</sup>

If collecting wild botanicals, information is known about the regeneration rate and conditions of the collected species, and the impact of collection activities



<sup>1</sup> Percentage (%) shown is the percentage of 100+ botanicals supply chains reviewed that met the scoring level.

### Box 7

#### What do we mean by 'not fulfilled' or 'insufficient'

The terms **improvement required** and **not fulfilled/insufficient** are used interchangeably in this section but all refer to the scoring in a UEBT assessment against the UEBT standard (specifically against its criteria and indicators).

When a requirement to be met is deemed 'not fulfilled or insufficient' it means that the particular supply chain under assessment did not meet the UEBT scoring level for satisfying the requirements (e.g. in the case of certification this would be called 'non-compliant.')

“UEBT assessments shine a light on the challenges, but they also have a practical purpose: to support UEBT members in defining and implementing improvement measures.

**Rik Kutsch Lojenga**, UEBT Executive Director

### 3.2 Overuse or misuse of agrochemicals, and poor waste management

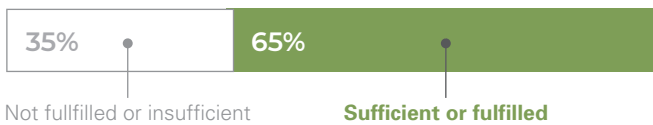
Agrochemicals are still widely used in botanicals, even in these delicate land use systems that are often where botanicals are cultivated or collected.

Related to chemical use, UEBT found that:

- Agrochemicals are used inappropriately, especially for restricted chemicals (see figure 5)
- Agrochemicals are not stored or disposed of properly, with significant risks to human health, water and more (see figure 6)
- Contamination and emissions from waste is also not sufficiently assessed (see figure 7)

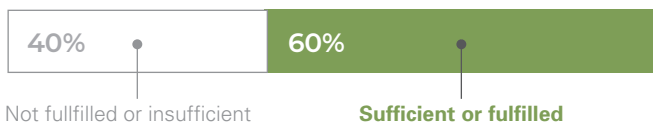
**Figure 5** Mitigation of agrochemicals | Supply chains reviewed (%)<sup>1</sup>

Appropriate practices are followed if agrochemicals used are considered to be of Restricted Use



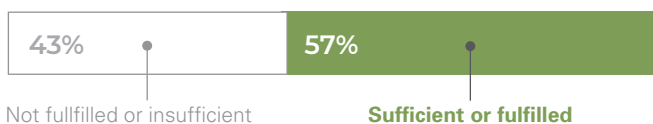
**Figure 6** Storage of agrochemicals | Supply chains reviewed (%)<sup>1</sup>

Agrochemicals are stored in their containers and disposed of in ways that do not threaten the environment



**Figure 7** Waste management | Supply chains reviewed (%)<sup>1</sup>

Actions are assessed to reduce emissions and contamination from waste disposal



<sup>1</sup> Percentage (%) shown is the percentage of 100+ botanicals supply chains reviewed that met the scoring level.

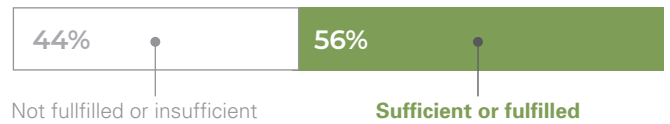
### 3.3 Unfair pay

Botanicals supply chains often have informal practices when it comes to wages and prices. Minimum wage equivalents are often not met when prices are paid to pickers or farmers, and almost no actions are yet seen to move towards living wages. Almost one-half of the UEBT assessments show improvements needed on wages and prices paid.

- Prices paid do not at least ensure a minimum wage equivalent
- Actions are not taken to reach living wage equivalent (see figure 8)

**Figure 8** Unfair pay | Supply chains reviewed (%)<sup>1</sup>

Prices are paid that at least ensure a minimum wage equivalent and actions are taken to reach a living wage equivalent



## A SILVER LINING: VERIFICATION AND CERTIFICATION PROVIDES A STRUCTURE THAT SEEKS AND STIMULATES IMPROVEMENT

When UEBT looks at these assessments over time (most are done annually, with auditors or experts returning to the same production areas), there are some positive trends.

Specifically, the process of getting assessed for certification or verification motivates commitment and triggers actions for improvement.

Over time, more requirements are met ('non-compliances' are closed or removed). Other interesting observations include:

- When a UEBT assessment is done for verification purposes (the UEBT verification programme provides an assessment against the same requirements as certification but does not

have a pass/fail approach and no on-pack claims or certification labels are allowed), the results show a larger number of improvements required<sup>1</sup>.

This demonstrates that a programme that allows flexibility in making improvements has value for companies, even without a consumer-facing labelling opportunity, and allows companies to understand the challenges without fear of a 'failed audit.'

- During a typical first assessment done for certification purposes, there is a fairly steady or medium rate of improvements needed ('non-compliances' in certification language), however by the third-year's assessment UEBT sees the lowest rates of non-compliances/improvements needed. (UEBT verification is newer, and so UEBT cannot yet track changes over three years' time).

This illustrates that the voluntary tools of verification and certification are having an influence on decisions or actions taken to both see the realities of challenges on the ground and improve environmental and social outcomes in these supply chains.

<sup>1</sup> 23% total non-compliances for verification, 16% total non-compliances for certification.



# 4 CALL TO ACTION: TOWARDS ETHICAL SOURCING OF BOTANICALS

Long-term benefits exist when botanicals are part of business strategies related to sustainability, and particularly when they are part of a robust biodiversity strategy.

These include access to long-term supply of specialty ingredients, reduced costs and better transparency into botanicals supply chains, and the potential for many direct positive outcomes and impacts for local communities and high biodiversity ecosystems.

Biodiversity is crucial for business and so its recovery and restoration must be integrated into the business. Biodiversity, and specifically botanicals, are the source for specialty ingredients in a wide range of sectors. However, the world has reached a level of biodiversity loss and species in danger of extinction where merely conserving biodiversity is not sufficient. The climate crisis and biodiversity loss together are pushing species to the brink.

For companies, this means when thinking of impacts and dependencies on biodiversity, they should look at practices linked to the cultivation or wild collection of natural raw materials, including plants and other biological resources. These include not only large-scale agricultural commodities but also the wide range of botanicals.

## Acknowledgements

*We wish to thank our members, certificate holders, their suppliers and supplier communities, and local organisations that work with them for sharing their willingness to undergo assessments of their botanicals operations, including farms and other supply chain entities, and that provided the aggregated data for section 3. We also thank our members for their commitment to continuous improvement in their sourcing systems and practices.*

*We also acknowledge the support and collaboration for UEBT's work on ethical sourcing of botanicals and for our annual consumer research from the following: the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development – UNCTAD, UEBT's funding partners and NGO partners, the UEBT staff and Board, and our accredited certification bodies.*

*Simona D'Amico*

*Lara Koritzke*

*Rik Kutsch Lojenga*

*Maria Julia Oliva*



ROSEHIP COLLECTED FROM THE WILD IN ARGENTINA | IMAGE COURTESY OF UEBT



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*UEBT is a non-profit association that promotes sourcing with respect. Its mission is to regenerate nature and secure a better future for people through ethical sourcing of ingredients from biodiversity.*

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 [www.youtube.com/user/UEBTgva](http://www.youtube.com/user/UEBTgva)

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