

Ethical BioTrade: Towards Sourcing with Respect



Supporting the 2020 United Nations biodiversity targets

By committing to Ethical BioTrade, companies support the 2020 United Nations Biodiversity targets.

Biodiversity encompasses the diversity of all living things, from human beings to microorganisms, including the variety of ecosystems. Conserving biodiversity is important for the long-term survival of our planet and provides a livelihood for local communities around the world. Business has an important role in conserving biodiversity.

UEBT and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) partner to promote business engagement in the sustainable use of biodiversity.

Union for Ethical BioTrade

The Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) is a member-based non-profit association that promotes the 'Sourcing with Respect' of ingredients that come from biodiversity. Members adopt sourcing practices that advance sustainable business growth, local development and biodiversity conservation. UEBT was created in 2007 as a spin off from the United Nations to promote business engagement in BioTrade.



Why join UEBT?

Driven by the increasing attention for sustainability of natural ingredients, fair trade practices, and the evolving legislation on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS), biodiversity based innovation and ethical sourcing will become increasingly important on the corporate agendas of the food, cosmetics and pharmaceutical sectors. UEBT membership supports companies to develop sourcing approaches that respond to these trends. Members get access to expertise, training materials, networking opportunities and other useful resources. The UEBT verification system guides UEBT members in structuring their ethical sourcing practices, securing their supply chains while responding to consumer and stakeholder expectations on ethical sourcing of biodiversity.

UEBT Mission:

To promote Ethical BioTrade practices by offering UEBT members independent verification, technical support and networking opportunities for biodiversity-based innovation and sourcing.



“The UEBT Biodiversity Barometer is an important source of information on global trends in biodiversity awareness. The results not only demonstrate a growing consciousness, they also show that respecting biodiversity provides tremendous opportunities for business around the world.”

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias,
Executive Secretary for the Convention
on Biological Diversity (CBD)

UEBT Vision:
To be the leading association of companies that are involved in biodiversity based innovation and sourcing, driving sustainable business growth, local development and biodiversity conservation.

Sourcing for a better world
Cosmetics, food and pharmaceutical companies source extensively from the natural world, relying on biodiversity to create new, innovative ingredients for their products. Their biggest environmental and social impact is often within their supply chains. How companies manage their sourcing practices thus greatly affects their impact on the environment and the source community. By applying the Ethical BioTrade standard, UEBT member companies add value to nature at a local level, motivating conservation efforts and promoting socio-economic development.

Consumer expectations
The UEBT Biodiversity Barometer reveals that an average of 80% of the 38,000 consumers surveyed between 2009-2014 indicate that they would like to receive more information on how companies source ingredients. A similar percentage indicates they want to receive more information on ethical sourcing practices. Less than 50% is confident that the beauty industry pays serious attention to ethical sourcing practices.

81% of consumers have more faith in a company whose commitment to ethical sourcing of biodiversity is verified by independent organisations.

Ethical BioTrade: examples of issues to consider

Development Phase		Production Phase		Marketing	
Is there an access permit to conduct research? Has consent been gained from the local community for the use of its traditional knowledge? Has benefit sharing been agreed?	Are there biopiracy concerns? Do patents recognise the origin of resources and knowledge?	Are the wages and prices fair? Are human rights respected? What is done to conserve biodiversity? Does this contribute to local development?	How are the ingredients sourced? Do patents recognise all contributions along the supply chain?	Is there a tracking system in place? Are we confident that the ingredients were sourced according to Ethical BioTrade Principles?	Is there conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing all along the supply chain? Are marketing claims backed up by actual practices?

Becoming a UEBT member

As UEBT Trading Member, a company agrees to respect the Ethical BioTrade standard throughout its operations and supply chains. Members adopt a gradual approach towards reaching compliance with the Ethical BioTrade standard, giving priority to those ingredients that are most relevant for ethical sourcing of biodiversity.

UEBT membership requirements

1. Ingredient portfolio assessment
2. Ethical BioTrade sourcing targets
3. Biodiversity management system
4. Independent audits
5. Three year work-plans

1. Ingredient Portfolio Assessment

UEBT member companies assess their natural ingredient portfolio to identify supply chains most relevant for Ethical BioTrade practices. Members follow a risk-based approach, taking into account issues such as social and environmental impacts, and strategic importance of the ingredients for their business. In order to assist members in prioritising their ingredients, UEBT has developed an Ingredient Portfolio Assessment tool.

2. Ethical BioTrade Sourcing Targets

UEBT members define and make publicly available their long-term Ethical BioTrade Sourcing Targets. These targets, which consider time periods of about ten years, set measurable goals towards the progress members plan to make with respect to Ethical BioTrade.

3. Biodiversity Management System

To reach their targets, UEBT calls for a Biodiversity Management System to be put in place. This system consists of a set of internal policies and procedures that, when followed, will ensure that the Ethical BioTrade standard is implemented. It includes information on how the company sources its ingredients, how it chooses new ingredients or new suppliers, how it negotiates prices and contracts, and how Ethical BioTrade is implemented along the supply chains.

UEBT Trading Members are those members that are directly involved in the supply chain of Ethical BioTrade goods and services (e.g. producer/collector organisations, processing companies, traders, manufacturing companies, brands, consortia of trading companies, research institutions, etc.).

4. Independent audits

A key component of the UEBT system is the provision of independent third party audits. On joining UEBT, members undergo an audit against the Ethical BioTrade standard. The audit assesses conformity with a number of entry-level requirements, and identifies areas for improvement to bring operations in line with the Ethical BioTrade standard. Further audits occur every three years and focus on the Biodiversity Management System, members' prioritisation of ingredients and progress made in the implementation of the Ethical BioTrade standard along supply chains.

The Ethical BioTrade Standard

- Biodiversity conservation
- Sustainable use
- Fair and equitable benefit sharing
- Socio-economic sustainability
- Legal compliance
- Respect for the right of actors
- Clarity about land tenure

5. Three Year Work-Plans

Short-term progress by UEBT members is promoted through the development and implementation of three-year work plans that are developed after each audit. Through these work plans, members specify objectives for a three-year period, and explain the actions they will take in order to achieve these objectives at the level of their company and their supply chains.



“Fair trade is part of Weleda’s philosophy and brand values. Our UEBT membership strengthens our credibility and ensures that we meet the expectations of our customers. ‘Ethical sourcing’ of biodiversity also assures the long-term security of our high-quality natural and genuine raw materials.”

Weleda Group

Member support

UEBT offers a range of manuals, training tools and advisory services to support its members to implement Ethical BioTrade practices. More information can be found on the UEBT website.

Communication on UEBT membership

UEBT members can illustrate their commitment to Ethical BioTrade by communicating their membership to customers and other stakeholders. Members that fulfil all membership obligations are provided with an annual certificate of membership, which can be shared with customers, partners or investors. In addition, members can use the UEBT Member logo on corporate communication such as their websites, catalogues and business cards. The UEBT logo is not for product specific marketing. UEBT does not have an on-product label.

Other UEBT rules of membership

UEBT members are asked to respect a number of rules and obligations aside from those directly related to their sourcing practices. For example, members are asked for annual, public progress reports to be submitted to UEBT. Members must also inform UEBT of any controversy surrounding any of their actions linked to biodiversity. Visit the UEBT website for more information on membership obligations and fees.

E-Training on ABS and UEBT Verification System

Community Kit: a UEBT capacity development learning set for local communities.

Contact UEBT

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