Regional Biotrade Project
Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Lao PDR, Myanmar)
CASE 1: Organic Chili in Vietnam

Selected because:
- An annual agricultural crop
- Clear export demand
- Benefits producers financially
- Unclear whether there is a meaningful biodiversity impact

Basic information:
- Produced in Cao Bang province
- Socially and environmentally committed partner company
- Product has multiple organic certifications
Not a native species
Not rare or endangered
Not a perennial product
Not a key ecosystem species
Does not grow in mature ecosystems
Minor food source for pollinators
Animals living on it killed as pests
Not a host for epiphytic plants
• Organic chili is better than conventional, but overall does not contribute to biodiversity conservation
• Annual species grown in agricultural settings are unlikely to provide significant biodiversity benefits
• Exceptions may be possible:
  • If additional biodiversity-specific interventions are taken (i.e. biodiversity action plans)
  • If grown in a more complex system like polyculture
  • If the species itself is endangered and domestication takes pressure off wild stocks
CASE 2: Siam Benzoin in Vietnam

- Siam benzoin is produced from Styrax tonkinensis, a fast growing tree that grows in disturbed areas.
- Commonly planted for paper, but most resin from wild production.
- Resin is tapped by cutting bark high above the ground.
- Used widely in fragrances as a fixative, and for medical, flavour and other purposes.
- Market is dominated by Laos, but production is being re-established in Vietnam.
A native species

Not rare or endangered

Perennial, up to 60 years

A key ecosystem species in early succession

Does not grow in mature ecosystems

Source of food for some animals

Not known to be a host plant for nesting

Not a host for epiphytic plants
• Siam benzoin production *has a positive impact on biodiversity*
• Especially good where styrax forest areas link national protected areas
• Despite the positive impact there is a serious sustainability issue in the longer term
• Producers not allowed to maintain the forest in a state that would preserve benzoin production, but illegal cutting is widespread
• Could a policy of sustainable work better than ineffective protection?
CASE 3: Indian Prickly Ash in Laos

- Zanthoxylum rhetsa is also a pioneering species,
- Berries used as a spice and a fragrance and flavour ingredient
- Can be harvested from wild stands, but also semi-domesticated
- In forest areas, often cut to harvest berries, more often picked when cultivated
- Best quality is from Huaphan province of Laos, in areas where other economic opportunities are limited
• Tree could become less common as agricultural practices change
• Some positive effects on pollinators and birds
• Cultivation in gardens can be combined with pasture for cattle
• Most important impact is at landscape level
• Provides an alternate income that does not require expansion of slash-and-burn cultivation
• Indian prickly ash has a positive impact on biodiversity and people
• Production could be expanded significantly if markets can be found
• Fits well with “Clean and Green” strategy for production
• Exporting these value-added, intermediate products does not fit with export promotion policies (yet...)
CASE 4: Jujube in Myanmar

- Two species, Ziziphus mauritana and Z. jujuba
- Both grow naturally in the central dry zone of Myanmar
- Fruit is collected and eaten immediately or dried
- Dried fruit used to make a variety of confectionaries, syrup, and powder
- Seed kernels are also used in Chinese medicine
• Jujube is highly drought resistant and well adapted to dry areas
• Provides food for a number of birds, animals and pollinators
• Endemic bird, white throated babblers, use it
• A key species in the open savannah of the central dry zone, providing habitat for numerous animals
• A very positive species for biodiversity
• Jujube is especially good for women’s economic inclusion
• Domestic market for syrup has grown rapidly, already providing benefits
• Accessing export markets for jujube powder and concentrated pulp would increase benefits further
• Currently only a few companies work with jujube
• Not a recognized priority product for government
• Take biodiversity into consideration when selecting products
• Engage with buyers that value biodiversity
• Partner with biodiversity expert organizations to support intervention on biodiversity topics
• Pay more attention to policy issues relevant to biodiversity in selected value chains
DOES PRODUCT HAVE EXPORT POTENTIAL?  

DOES PRODUCT HAVE INHERENT BIODIVERSITY IMPACT?  

CAN PRODUCT BE PRODUCED IN A WAY THAT PRODUCES A BIODIVERSITY IMPACT?  

ARE THERE BUYERS WILLING TO PAY A PREMIUM FOR BIODIVERSITY IMPACT?  

SUSTAINABLE INGREDIENTS  

UNION FOR ETHICAL BIOTRADE  

SOURCING WITH RESPECT
GROUP WORK

Divide into three groups by country
Review “Key Facts” sheet for your cases
Work as a group, 20 minutes on each question

• Vietnam: Siam benzoin
• Laos: Indian prickly ash
• Myanmar: Jujube
• Note your answer to questions on flipchart and be prepared to present findings to other groups.