

THE EUDAFANO WOMEN'S CO-OPERATIVE PRODUCING MARULA OIL FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETS IN NAMIBIA

The Eudafano Women's Co-operative EWC producing Marula oil for international markets in Namibia is one of the successful examples of enhancing local resources and traditional knowledge to build profitable and sustainable economic initiatives.

The EWC Co-operative, registered in 1996, is today composed by 26 associations and 2,500 women harvesting and processing the nuts of Marula wild Trees.

[Marula \(*Sclerocarya birrea*\)](#) is a medium-sized tree growing in the forests of Southern Africa and Madagascar. In Namibia for generations women have used this tree in a variety of ways as a source of food and income. The most important product of the Marula tree is the oil that can be used to preserve meat, as skin moisturizer and ingredient for popular foods and alcoholic beverages. For generations women in rural Namibian communities have been using traditional techniques drying Marula kernels in the sun and then cracking them open to extract and produce Marula oil for their families and to sell it on an informal scale.

The Marula oil is extremely rich in linoleic fatty acid, antioxidants and oleic acid, which are essential for the preservation of healthy human skin. Being ten times more resistant to oxidation than olive oil, it is one of the most stable natural oil in the world. Because of its exceptional chemical stability, Marula oil is an ideal ingredient to be used in many cosmetic products.

Valorizing the local traditional knowledge, since 2010 the EWC Women's Co-operative is the second largest producer of Marula oil in Southern Africa reaching an international market. In particular, the Marula products harvested and made by the EWC are sold to companies such as [The Body Shop](#), Marula Natural Products of South Africa (Marula Natural), and Distell.

In the presentation made at the 4th Bio Trade Congress *Biodiversity and Business Forum*, organized by UNCTAD in Cancun (Mexico, December 2016) the [Eudafano Women's Co-operative describes the impact results achieved](#):

- 75% increase in membership, from 1.432 women in 2008 to 2.500 members in 2016.
- Associations have also increased from 9 founding members associations to 26 Associations and 2 collection centers.
- Increased income from the sales of Marula Oil and Raw materials is visible. Income of members have quadruple from US\$ 20,863 in 2012 to US\$ 104,712 in 2015.



- Marula oil production has increased from 8 tons annually to more than 12 tons to date, which can be augmented even more in line with the demand.
- Export Sales for Marula Oil increased by 188%, from 3 419 kg annually in 2009 to 9 880 kg in 2014.
- 80% of Marula Oil production is exported for skin care products.

In the website of the [World Intellectual Property Organization WIPO](#) an exhaustive document presents the story of Eudafano Women's Co-operative, the various stages of their ambitious project and the actors who have supported its achievements. The processing technology was developed and tested with the support of the Centre for Research, Information and Action in Africa - Southern Africa Development and Consulting (CRIA SA-DC) and feasibility studies and product marketing researches were carried out in their business incubator. The first large customer was [The Body Shop International \(BSI\)](#) company interested in the properties of the oil but also in the fact that the product was supplied by a rural cooperative of women. In 2005 the Namibian Government facilitated the funds to build the factory where the Co-operative process the raw materials into oils. The Eudafano Women's Marula Manufacturing Pty Ltd (EWMM) in Ondangwa is a company 100% owned by the Cooperative.

Production methods have been structured in order to provide buyers with a high quality product in the required quantities. Trained by the Cooperative to the new production process, the women combine it with their traditional knowledge in harvesting Marula fruits from the best wild trees and delivering the kernels and seeds to the processing factory. In the final step, the oils and juices are then extracted through a combination of hand and machine processing at a factory in Ondangwa, the heart of the Marula growing region.

Another important aspect was the partnership established by the Eudafano Women's Co-operative with [Phyto Trade Africa](#), the Southern African Natural Products Trade Association. Phyto Trade Africa, involving Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, is a membership-based organization established in 2001 to develop a sustainable natural products industry in Southern Africa that will be of a mutual benefit either for people and for biodiversity. The partnership with PhytoTrade allowed the Cooperative to open new markets for the Marula products and new income opportunities for local communities.

As a member of Phyto Trade Africa, the Eudafano Women's Co-operative is operating within the [7 Bio Trade Principles](#) and its vision is to be the leading organization that commercializes indigenous plant resources for improving living condition of rural communities, particularly rural women.

To know more

[Eudafano Presentation in UNCTAD forum](#)

[Document in Wipo.int website](#)

[Article in National Botanical Research Institute website](#)



THE BODY SHOP

WHO?
THE EUDAFANO WOMEN'S CO-OPERATIVE

WHAT?
COMMUNITY FAIR TRADE MARULA OIL

WHEN?
2000 - PRESENT

WHERE?
CENTRAL NAMIBIA

WHY?
THE WOMEN TELL US THAT THE EXPERIENCE OF TRADING AND OF SETTING UP THEIR OWN FACTORY HAS GIVEN THEM **ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND GREATER STATUS** IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

[Article in trickleout.net](http://trickleout.net)

[Article in theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com)

[Marula products in Phytotrade website](#)

[Phytotrade Africa in IFAD website](#)

[Article in Namibian.com.na](http://Namibian.com.na)

[Marula oil in Wikipedia](#)

[Publication in OECD website](#)

