

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF TRADE IN WILD PLANT INGREDIENTS

NEW REPORT BY FAO

The new Report published in April 2022 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), [Wild Check: Assessing risks and opportunities of trade in wild plant ingredients](#), sheds light on twelve flagship species, the so-called "wild dozen", that are hidden in everyday products. Developed in collaboration with the [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) and [TRAFFIC](#), a non-governmental organization working globally on trade in wild animals and plants, the Report aims to raise awareness about the sustainable use of wild-harvested plants.

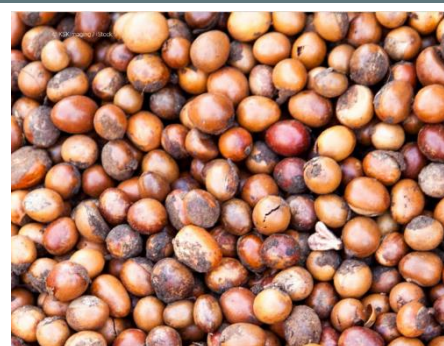
The Report highlights that "Thousands of consumer products around the world contain ingredients obtained from wild plants. Wild-harvested plants often come from the most biodiverse ecosystems on Earth and many have been used traditionally or by local communities for generations. While these products have global markets and provide critical sources of income, they can also have deep ties to particular cultures and places.

Demand for wild plant ingredients is growing rapidly, having grown by more than 75% in value in the past two decades, especially in the richest countries. As a result, thousands of harvested species are at risk from a combination of overharvesting and habitat loss: of the 21% of medicinal and aromatic plant species whose threat status has been assessed, 9% are considered threatened with extinction. Despite their ubiquity, importance and the threats facing them, wild plant ingredients are often obscured due to a lack of awareness and traceability. Best practice standards exist, but have yet to capture a significant portion of the market."

The Report contains a series of plant profiles, which provide an overview of twelve selected wild plant species including information on their distribution. They also provide conservation and social risk profiles, each of which include a traffic-light rating indicating the risks related to the value chain, flagging to users the key issues they should be looking for. The profiles also highlight the opportunities for overcoming these risks, contributing to global conservation, and supporting livelihoods of local communities.

The wild dozen plants presented in the Report are:

- **Frankincense.** Found in north-eastern parts of Africa, as well as in Oman, Somalia and Yemen, its resin is used for incense, aromatherapy, cosmetics, perfumes and traditional medicines.



- *Pygeum*. Also listed in ingredients for medicines and herbal products as Prunus, African cherry, red stinkwood or African almond, this tree grows in forests across tropical Africa.
- *Shea*: Grows across Africa, from Senegal to Uganda. Used widely in the food industry as a cocoa butter equivalent, it is also popular in cosmetics. Locally, it is used as a healthy cooking oil.
- *Jatamansi*. A perennial, aromatic plant that grows in the Himalayas, its roots are harvested for their medicinal properties.
- *Gum Arabic*. This species grows in Africa and is primarily used in the food and pharmaceutical industries as an additive, emulsifier or stabilizer.
- *Goldenseal*. Also known as hydraste du Canada or ground raspberry, this species is native to eastern North America and is primarily used for medicinal products.
- *Candelilla*. Found in Mexico and confining parts of the United States, candelilla wax was a common ingredient in chewing gum. It is used as a food additive (E902) and in cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, as well as industrial waxes and polishes.
- *Argan*. Also known as Moroccan oil, its anti-ageing properties make it a popular choice among European and North American consumers of cosmetics. Its oil is also used to treat a number of ailments, from acne to arthritis. It grows in Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and the Western Sahara territory.
- *Baobab*. The *Adansonia digitata* variety of this species is native to mainland Africa. Baobab powder is used as a food and beverage ingredient, while its seed oil is used as a cosmetic ingredient.
- *Brazil nut*. Harvested entirely from the wild, the tree is primarily exploited for its nutritious, edible nuts packed with nutrients and antioxidants such as magnesium, zinc, protein and selenium. Its harvesting has contributed to preserving millions of hectares of Amazonian forests, which is why it is often called the cornerstone of Amazon Forest conservation.
- *Liquorice*. This perennial herb is native to Eurasia, northern Africa and western Asia, and is primarily used for medicinal purposes, as a sweetener and in the tobacco industry.
- *Juniper*. *Juniperus communis* is a species of the temperate and subarctic northern hemisphere and its berries are a key ingredient in gin manufacturing. They are also used as a food flavouring, an essential oil, an ingredient in cosmetics, and have a long history of use in traditional medicines and for religious purposes.

The information provided by the Report is aimed at industry, consumers, policy-makers, investors, and practitioners, concluding with a summary of what these various stakeholders can do to contribute to a sectoral shift towards responsible sourcing of wild plant ingredients. Across the twelve wild-harvested ingredients, a range of engaging opportunities are noted including sustainable harvest, wildlife conservation and restoration, access and benefit sharing, research, partnerships, and engagement with best practice standards and certification.

In the Conclusions, the Report highlights that “the profiles focus on the Wild Dozen, a selection of wild-harvested ingredients chosen as flagships to represent the harvest methods, trade, risks, and opportunities that could face all types of wild-harvested plant ingredients. Despite their geographical spread and use across vastly different industries (from beauty to food to aromatherapy to tobacco), there are a number of similarities amongst the risks and opportunities facing these ingredients.

The important role these species place in the communities that harvest them is also emphasized. Risks around working conditions for harvesters, including health and safety, wages, and gender equality, are identified in most profiles, yet do not typically receive much attention in



international supply chains. The importance of wild-harvested species to their surrounding ecosystems is repeatedly highlighted, including in some cases those species' ability to contribute to conservation or restoration efforts.

In the presentation of the Report, FAO underlines that the sustainable use of wild plants has crucial implications for food security and for the livelihoods of millions of people around the world. It is critical that wild plants are seen as an important part of the efforts to protect and restore habitats, promote sustainable agri-food systems and build inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies.

To know more

[News in FAO website](#)

[Wildcheck – Assessing the risks and opportunities of trade in wild plant ingredients Report \(fao.org\)](#)

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