

PhytoTrade Africa Environmental Charter

WHEREAS we, the members of PhytoTrade Africa, the Southern African Natural Products Trade Association (hereinafter called 'PhytoTrade') are committed to promoting the principles of sustainable use and sound environmental management in the production and trade of natural products in the Southern African region and internationally, and are willing to express our commitment through signature to a common Charter,

NOW THEREFORE we agree that:

1. PRODUCT SELECTION

- a) Prior to selecting a product, we shall compile a written justification for the selection that specifically details the distribution, abundance and conservation status of the biological resource from which it is derived.
- b) In the selection of natural products, we shall ensure that special care is taken to guarantee the sustainability of biological resources that are comparatively rare, or that occur in fragile or vulnerable ecosystems.
- c) We shall endeavour to ensure that the long-term tenure and use rights to the land and biological resources from which our natural products are derived are clearly defined, documented and legally established.

2. HARVESTING METHODS

- a) We shall ensure that all harvesting methods used in the production of natural products shall minimise adverse environmental impacts, including, where appropriate, through *in situ* management, domestication and cultivation.
- b) We shall maintain a written description and justification of harvesting techniques and equipment used.
- c) In our production activities, we shall minimise waste associated with harvesting and on-site processing operations, and avoid negative environmental impacts.

3. RESOURCE REGENERATION

- a) We shall endeavour to ensure that, at all times, the rate of harvest of a biological resource shall not exceed levels which can be sustained.
- b) For each natural product we produce, we shall maintain a written justification of the regenerative capacity of the biological resource from which it is obtained.

4. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- a) We shall encourage the development, implementation and monitoring of resource management plans for all biological resources from which our natural products are derived.
- b) In the management of, and harvest from, biological resources, we shall encourage the efficient use of the ecosystem's multiple products and services to ensure economic viability and a wide range of environmental and social benefits.
- c) In our resource management and harvesting activities, we shall conserve biological diversity and its associated values, water resources, soils, and unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes, and, by so doing, maintain the ecological functions and the integrity of the ecosystem.
- d) Ecological functions and values shall be maintained intact, enhanced, or restored, including:
 - i) Regeneration and succession.
 - ii) Genetic, species, and ecosystem diversity.
 - iii) Natural cycles that affect the productivity of the ecosystem.
- e) Resource management should strive towards economic viability, while taking into account the full environmental, social, and operational costs of production, and ensuring the investments necessary to maintain the ecological integrity of the ecosystem.
- f) We shall encourage the optimal use and local processing of an ecosystem's diversity of products.
- g) We shall promote the development and adoption of environmentally friendly methods of pest management and strive to avoid the use of any pesticides banned by international agreement. If chemicals are used, proper equipment and training shall be provided to minimise health and environmental risks.
- h) Chemicals, containers, liquid and solid non-organic wastes including fuel and oil shall be disposed of in an environmentally appropriate manner.
- i) Where we use biological control agents, this shall be documented, minimised, monitored and strictly controlled in accordance with national laws and internationally accepted scientific protocols. We shall not use Genetically Modified Organisms.
- j) The use of exotic species shall be carefully controlled and actively monitored to avoid adverse ecological impacts.

5. COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS

- a) In the production and trade of natural products, we shall respect all applicable laws of the country in which they occur, and any international treaties and agreements to which the country is a signatory (in particular, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands).

6. TENURE AND USE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- a) We shall uphold the principle that local communities with legal or customary tenure or use rights maintain control, to the extent necessary to protect their rights or resources, over the harvesting and manufacture of natural products, unless they delegate control with free and informed consent to other agencies.

7. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

- a) We shall respect and recognise the legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use and manage their lands, territories, and resources.
- b) The management and use of biological resources for our products shall not threaten or diminish, either directly or indirectly, the resources or tenure rights of indigenous peoples.
- c) Sites of special cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance to indigenous peoples shall be clearly identified in cooperation with such peoples, and recognised and protected by resource managers.
- d) We recognise the complexities surrounding the rights of indigenous peoples in the commercialisation of biological resources, and commit ourselves to the development of meaningful and innovative solutions to access and benefit sharing issues.

I _____, being a representative of _____, and being duly
(*your name*) (the member's name, if different)

authorised to sign on behalf of the same, do hereby declare that I have read and understood this

Charter, and I hereby commit _____ to abide by its provisions.
(*member's name*)

Signed _____

Date _____

Background Notes to the PhytoTrade Environmental Charter

1. Rationale for Having an Environmental Charter

PhytoTrade members are drawn from a wide spectrum of players in the natural products industry. Its primary constituency is poor rural producers, but its members also include NGOs, the private sector, researchers, government departments and interested individuals.

In joining PhytoTrade, each member has to formally sign the Association's constitution. This binds them to the objectives of PhytoTrade, amongst which the following is paramount:

8.1 To enable poor rural communities in the Southern African region to generate income through the sustainable utilisation of natural products.

In order that members have a common understanding of what 'sustainable utilisation of natural products', as described in the constitution, really means, it has been agreed that a separate Environmental Charter should be developed, relating in particular to the principles of sustainable utilisation, but referring also more broadly to principles of good environmental practice. This Charter would then form an addendum to the Constitution, and signature to the Charter would also be pre-requisite for membership of PhytoTrade.

2. Definition of Sustainable Use

The international Convention on Biological Diversity¹ defines sustainable use as follows:

The use of biological resources in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity, thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations.

This definition, which is expounded in Article 10 of the Convention, is widely acknowledged and accepted throughout the world.

3. Sustainable Use in Practice

In practice, and relating to natural products, sustainable use means that the use of the natural resource from which a product is derived does not have a negative long term impact on either its availability or on the biodiversity of the ecosystem in which it is found.

This is complex, in that the way in which a resource is used or harvested is often more important than the mere fact of its use. For example, while there may be no theoretical negative long term impacts on availability from using the fruit of a tree for a particular

¹ Probably the single most important international convention relating to sustainable use, and to which all of PhytoTrade's member countries are signatory

natural product, if the entire tree is being cut down to harvest that fruit, very real negative impacts are likely to be experienced.

Added to this is a further complication, which is that it can be extremely difficult to assess the long term negative impacts on biodiversity from using a particular species. Thus, for example, if a fruit happened to be the primary food source for a particular caterpillar, and if the butterfly from that caterpillar was essential to the pollination of another tree, intensive harvesting of that fruit could have very severe long term impacts on biodiversity. But these would take many years to be felt, and would be extremely difficult to predict in advance.

For practical purposes, therefore, sustainable use related to natural products means:

- a) **Biological resource selection:** using resources that are found in comparative abundance, and are not in areas of rare or endangered biodiversity
- b) **Harvesting methods:** employing low-impact harvesting methods that minimise the threat of long term negative impacts
- c) **Resource regeneration:** harvesting only resources, or parts of those resources, that will regenerate easily (i.e. giving preference to harvesting fruits and leaves over roots and barks)
- d) **Resource management:** encouraging the active use of resource management strategies that promote sustainability

4. PhytoTrade and the Environment

PhytoTrade is not an Eco-Labeling Organisation, and cannot certify any of its members' products as environmentally friendly or sustainable products. Moreover, since most natural products fall outside the limited range of products for which internationally recognised environmental standards exist (e.g. timber), there are few, if any, other organisations that could provide such certification.

However, PhytoTrade is committed to the principles of sustainable use and sound environmental management, and as such will endeavour to ensure that all its members actively adhere to these principles in the production and trade of natural products. The primary instrument for achieving this is the Environmental Charter, to which all members must be signatory. Any member found to be in breach of the conditions of the Charter is therefore liable to expulsion from the Association.

Thus, while PhytoTrade is not able to guarantee that products supplied by its members have been sustainably produced, it is able to assert that its members are actively committed to the principles of sustainable use and sound environmental management, and have signed a Charter to this effect. Moreover, PhytoTrade is able to facilitate environmental audits on its members and their products if requested to do so, and financed, by a particular client.

