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Analysis of Thanakha's market potential through the implementation of access and benefit sharing (ABS) and biotrade principles in Myanmar

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World's demand for biological resources as natural ingredients is growing rapidly, creating new opportunities for investment on natural-based products, but also threats for the conservation of local biodiversity. The Nagoya Protocol (NP) on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) seeks to safeguard user's access to biological resources and traditional knowledge, in exchange of sharing the benefits derived from their use with the original providers. Myanmar, one of the most rich-biodiversity countries in the world, signed the NP in 2014, but has not implemented it yet. Thanakha is a natural-based product from Myanmar's Dry Zone traditionally used because of its skin care and cosmetic properties. Through mixed research tools, this study seeks to analyse the potential of implementing ABS or other measures for promoting sustainable development of Thanakha, as a high-export potential natural BioTrade

product from Myanmar. Nowadays, there is a weak regulatory framework related with ABS implementation in Myanmar. Current research and development (R&D) activities on Thanakha could trigger ABS obligations, but ongoing benefit sharing practices raise uncertainties. There is a low level of traceability, low/medium access to relevant information by the farmers, low access to fair prices by farmers, low commitment of companies with local development, and lack of agreements when sourcing Thanakha for R&D or commercial purpose. Thanakha farming represents an important source of income for rural inhabitants. Implementing BioTrade principles and ethical sourcing practices can promote sustainable trade of Thanakha and support the implementation of ABS. Other measures could be Geographical Indications, or Property Rights of Traditional Varieties.

Biography

José Undurraga has completed his MSc Life Sciences in Agriculture and Forestry Sciences with specialization on Rural Development and Value Chains at School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences, of Bern University of Applied, Switzerland. His work experience is linked to rural extension systems, and applied research for development of agricultural Value Chains in Chile and Myanmar.

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