

Draft minutes of the 22nd Biotrade Stakeholders' Forum Meeting
10:00 – 12:00, Thursday, 20th June 2024
Virtual Meeting
Theme: Past and Future – Challenges and Opportunities

1. Virtual Arrival

2. Welcome, Apologies, Purpose of meeting and approval of draft Agenda

The Chairperson welcomed all participants, emphasizing that the primary goal of these gatherings is to facilitate information exchange and mutual briefing. The Chairperson also noted that a key strength of our network lies in our ability to leverage collective expertise when addressing industry queries, providing guidance, and offering assistance when needed.

The Chairperson highlighted the updates on two pivotal initiatives identified during the 21st meeting, chaired by ABioSA:

1. Update by SSAIP on the survey outcomes on intellectual property (IP) training needs within the biotrade sector
2. Mesopartner's presentation on the outcome of the strategic analysis on the three biotrade forums

The Chairperson shared that the theme for the 22nd Biotrade Stakeholder Forum is: **Past and Future – Challenges and Opportunities.**

The draft agenda was adopted (Proposer: Adrie El Mohamadi/Seconder: Karen Swanepoel).

3. Minutes of the 21st Biotrade Stakeholder Forum meeting held on 20th February 2024

The minutes of the 21st Biotrade Stakeholder Forum Meeting were presented and adopted (Proposer: Karen Swanepoel/Seconder: Elsie Meintjies).

4. Matters Arising

The dates for the 3rd SAEOPA Essential and Vegetable Oils Conference have been rescheduled to 25-26 July, 2024 as the 18th of July is Mandela Day. The 23rd Biotrade Stakeholders meeting will be held on the 23rd of October .

5. Presentation by Georges Bauer, SSAIP: How can IP be used to support bioprospecting and the biotrade sector: outcome of survey and next steps

Survey results:

- 27 responses received and 1 respondent registered no interest in the trainings
- Additional topics suggested for the trainings included: navigating the CIPC process, how

to register and protect IPRs and costs involved, plant breeder's rights, what IP is not regulated by legislation and discussions on traditional knowledge

Two types of trainings developed:

- First is a beginners guide on IP for SMEs to be able to make an informed decision, the second training will focus on export - what are your rights and obligations?

Proposed trainings for September 2024:

- Shared that still aiming to do the trainings at the African BioTrade Festival (ABF) and hold both the basic and advanced trainings, as interest was expressed for both
- Noted that the agenda for the African BioTrade Festival is yet to be confirmed and how much time will be given to present
- Shared the outline of the trainings, which would also include the international landscape but also the Nagoya Protocol and obligations as a signatory

What Comes Next:

- Plans to do trainings outside the African BioTrade Festival for instance at another gathering of SMEs in a certain province or city or even virtually
- Noted that feedback is always welcome so that the trainings are demand-driven
- South African centric trainings and SA's IP regime but also what is being discussed at the regional (African) level and how this might affect South Africa
- Training contents will be updated based on feedback.

6. Q&A on presentation:

The Chairperson asked if any submissions or comments had not been considered. Georges responded that all concerns will be addressed during the training and encouraged everyone to provide feedback or suggestions.

The Chairperson also sought clarification on the end date of the SSAIP project. Georges indicated that while the projects ends in July 2025, all activities will have to be closed by 30 April 2025. He also mentioned that a second phase of the project is currently under discussion.

Adrie noted that with regard to the ABF, the mentioned proposal is what they would like to present as a separate workshop area and that it is still to be submitted to the BioPANZA Chairpersons (DSI, DFFE, **the dtic**) and they hope to get feedback in the coming weeks.

The Chairperson thanked Georges for helping everyone to better understand IP issues.

7. Presentation by Mesopartner: Strategic analysis of three biotrade forums in South Africa

Mesopartner shared the outcome of the study that was requested by DFFE during the previous biotrade stakeholders' meeting. There are a number of platforms in the biotrade sector and it

may be a good idea to see if these forums can be streamlined. There was the perception that the participants in all 3 forums are mainly the same and that it was very time consuming. As such, Mesopartner was contracted to do a strategic analysis of the three biotrade forums in South Africa.

The Chairperson noted that this study is part of a process and that a way forward is yet to be identified.

Scope of the study:

- The study undertook a desktop analysis of information from various steering structure representatives, focusing on three biotrade forums.
- It involved examining each of the forums' mandates, memberships, and knowledge repositories. Individual participation in forums was documented in a spreadsheet to compare engagement across activities.
- The accuracy of this data was dependent on the member lists provided, and the spreadsheet was verified by forum representatives. Participants' data were then visualized using a social network map on kumu.io to analyze network clusters and patterns.
- Additionally, the study assessed how the forums track shared information, members, learning, and problem-solving within their networks.
- A significant limitation noted was the focus on only three biotrade forums, and since the BioPANZA is not fully operational, the study concentrated solely on the BioPANZA MAC.

Key insights gained from the study:

Forum Structures and Governance

- Although some organizations belong to multiple forums, each forum has a distinct mandate and configuration.
- The Biotrade Stakeholders' forum is decentralized and functions as an affinity network, facilitating information dissemination and peer learning based on members' interests.
- It depends on members' personal commitment to share information and collaborate.
- The MAC and BioProspecting forums are formally governed hybrid networks with a legal structure representing duly authorized members.
- These forums serve as an official channel for stakeholder engagement with the government.
- Membership of the BioProspecting and MAC forums overlaps to some extent, but their themes and activities only partially overlap.
- The mandates and functions of the BioProspecting and MAC forums are different.
- Individuals' contributions and roles can vary even if they belong to both networks.

Network Reach and Engagement

- The three forums collectively have extensive reach into the public sector, higher education sector, and industry or community representative organizations.
- All three forums disseminate policy, strategic, and thematic information to their respective networks.

- Only the Biotrade Stakeholders Forum maintains a public information repository accessible to members and their constituencies.
- All three forums act as coordinators of activities that span organizational boundaries.
- One of the powerful features of networks is that members can access other members' extended acquaintances or resources, a phenomenon that Mark Granovetter described as the "strength of weak ties."

Information Dissemination and Member Interaction

- All three forums disseminate information to diverse networks of organizations involved in biotrade.
- It may seem that information dissemination efforts are duplicated, but the purpose and nature of information sharing vary across forums.
- Members engage differently with shared material; in some cases, formal comments or inputs are required, leading to formal positions.
- The Biotrade Stakeholders' forum's informal governance allows it to respond quickly to opportunities or challenges and encourages collaboration around common or emerging interests in the short and medium term.

Coordination and Cross-Forum Collaboration

- A key question is how issues needing formal or enduring commitment are communicated or transferred to other networks and formal stakeholders.
- Another question is how ideas requiring less formal coordination can be shifted from the MAC and BioProspecting forums to the Biotrade Stakeholders' Forum.

8. Q&A on presentation:

Following the presentation the below points were raised:

- Karen Swanepoel congratulated Mesopartner on the presentation and the visual presentation on where the 3 forums stand. She shared that one can distinctively see where the indigenous species are featured and this might be the reason why the number of activities vary across forums, especially the BioPANZA and Bioprosecting forums are focused on indigenous species, but if we go to the Biotrade forum, it also includes non-indigenous species.
- Mesopartner responded that in the Biotrade Stakeholder's forum, there are a lot of supporting organizations which do not respond to a specific species so you also have organizations who try to respond to SMEs in general. Mesopartner also noted that the size of the network is immaterial to the value of the network and the work these individuals are doing within their organizations
- Adrie El Mohamadie (ABioSA) noted that the Biotrade Stakeholder forum is only focusing on indigenous plants and products and does not work with non-indigenous species and wished to confirm this with Elsie Meintjies (GQSP-SA)
- Elsie (GQSP-SA) clarified that the project does focus on indigenous species, however, the work could well be applicable to all species
- A representative from the Ecosystem for Small Enterprises Programme commented

that she really liked how the three different forums were compared. She noted that in her programme, they have been setting up a Community of Practice (CoP) and what has been covered lays the foundation for evolving the forums to CoPs in the future where information can be stored.

- Mesopartner responded saying that networks need to be intensive as opposed to extensive so creating CoPs is typically the way to go. However, the challenge is to feed it back into the bigger network.
- Adrie El Mohamadie commented that with regard to the BioPANZA MAC, it is one leg of the full BioPANZA (4 more clusters). The study had the opportunity to look at the one cluster, however, for everyone to see the full picture, we do need an understanding and perspective of the full 5 clusters and how they collaborate together as a network. This is still work in progress. Mesopartner noted that this is an important reminder.

9. Updates on other projects and/or future activities

9.1. Feedback on CECOSA activities

- Mariette van Rooyen shared that CECOSA is one of 15 export councils under **the dtic** and is mandated to grow exports for cosmetic products and natural ingredients.
- Recently attended the SIPPO Import Forum in Lausanne, Switzerland where she met and worked with representatives from the other 11 SIPPO countries.
- visited two companies in the natural manufacturing space sector.
- in the next 12 months, CECOSA is planning to have two pavilions and:
 - o participate in the Cosmopack Asia Expo in Hong Kong from 12-14 November, 2024
 - o participate at the incosmetics Global in Amsterdam from 8-10 April, 2025
- As part of the preparations, CECOSA is planning to host a roundtable in August 2024 that will:
 - o include all the stakeholders and industry specialists and some buyers from Europe to be part of the panel.
 - o this activity is also aimed at capacity building for export promotion specifically and Cosmopack Asia (Hong Kong) is a trade fair under the Cosmo Prof Umbrella and includes the supply chain for cosmetics of natural ingredients, packaging and machinery.

CECOSA hopes to introduce more companies from South Africa to the international markets and also to create awareness of what South Africa has to offer.

9.2. Feedback on SAEOPA activities

Update on the permit issues:

- SAEOPA commenced training on the on-line permit application system with 15 identified candidates. They evaluated various producers based on the species they handle, their size, their locations, and market demands.
- Suggested that CECOSA provide an update on the comparison of exported indigenous versus non-indigenous products, which is currently showing a significant gap. Producers are not able to export without proper permits.
- The training for the 15 candidates focused on producers from the top producing provinces: KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Limpopo, and the Free State, although the species in focus are not all indigenous.
- The online permitting system was introduced to streamline the process. 5 of the 15 candidates have already submitted their applications online, although some submissions were returned and resubmitted due to system bottlenecks.
- Suggested that there is a need for a full-time help desk to assist more producers in obtaining permits to enable them to export.
- Coffee mugs with the SAEOPA logo have been printed and those candidates who submit online by the agreed due date. This small token has been appreciated.

SAEOPA identified as a partner of the Erasmus Project "Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Academy for Women in Africa":

- SAEOPA is one of the 5 countries to implement this academy, which kicked off in February 2024 and the training will be starting soon, with a visit to the other partners, including Mauritius. The partners will come to South Africa next year (2025), where SAEOPA will showcase how producers are trained on processing of medicinal and aromatic plants.
- The site identified for the training will be Rosemary Hill as it is central, it is safe and there are solar panels and very good security on the farm.
- The other countries are: Kenya, Mauritius, Hungary and Slovakia.

Update on the 3rd SAEOPA conference:

- Dates: 25-26 July, 2024
- SAEOPA shared that the speakers have been lined up. Out of the 21 speakers invited, there are about 6 that are academics but also involved in industry. SAEOPA also mentioned the triangle of industry - academics - government, which is crucial. The other speakers are 8 people from industry and 8 from government.
- There will be 10 exhibitions and 200 delegates are expected. The venue is yet to be confirmed. Exhibits will include value added products and 2 demonstrations (one on steam distillation and one on cold pressing).
- SAEOPA looks forward to welcoming all at the conference.

10. Any other business (AOB) from Stakeholders

No requests for AOB were received.

The Chairperson then asked members what motivates them to participate in the meetings to

which Karen Swanepoel responded that the platform really helps with networking and broadens the database.

The Chairperson noted that there is a need to infuse new energy into this network and received the following inputs:

- Mariette van Rooyen responded that the networking opportunities are valued and shared how there are plans to hold supplier days with members so that they can also introduce indigenous species and suppliers to their network of manufacturers. She noted that the board is very keen to do a project like this.
- Cyril Lombard noted that the virtual forums can be a very efficient way to share relevant information. He suggested that what we need is an ecosystem of platforms as opposed to one mega platform and supports the observations made by Mesopartner.

11. Wrap-up and way forward

The Chairperson shared the three main take-aways:

1. Any additional comments or inputs on the IP training should be further shared and SSAIP have invited members to do so.
2. The proposal for the SSAIP training is still to go to the BioPANZA Chairs for discussion.
3. Continuation for the study and the work that was presented by Mesopartner on the strategic analysis, including further understanding of the other BioPANZA clusters as well, which includes finance, innovation, market access, sustainable supply and policy. By the next meeting, we should have more information on the way forward.

12. Date and theme for next meeting

23rd meeting, 23rd October 2024, ABioSA to host.

