

# Protecting Plants, People, and Planet in the Botanical Supply Chain

Supply Chain, Delivery Systems and Technology:  
Mastering the Market

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Naturally Informed  
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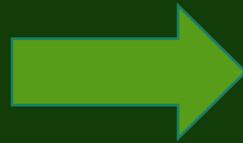
Sustainable  
HERBS INITIATIVE

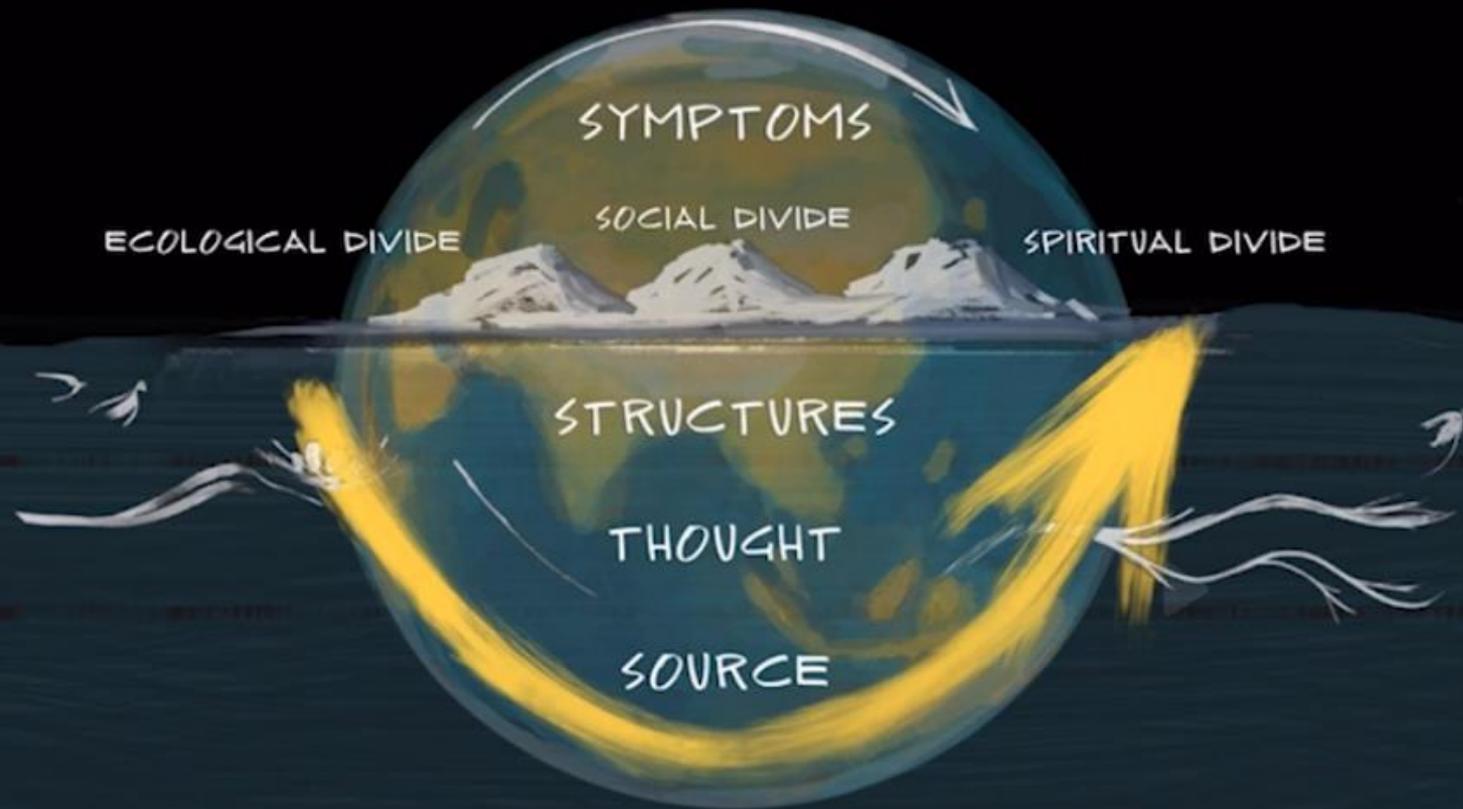






# Putting herbs back in place





“We collectively create results that no one wants.”  
– Otto Scharmer, Theory U and the Presencing Institute



## Sustainable Herbs Initiative

SHI is a pre-competitive partnership of leading herbal companies working for a more sustainable and prosperous future for the plants, the people working with the plants, and the planet.



# What SHI Does

## Working Groups



We bring diverse stakeholders together to tackle complex sustainability challenges. Through collaborative innovation, we foster new practices rooted in equity, respect, and reciprocity.

Monthly virtual gatherings create space for peer learning and relationship-building. We share case studies, insights, and real-world challenges in an ongoing supportive environment.

- Mapping Sourcing Risks
- Quality and Compliance
- Wild Plants
- Primary Producers
- Storytelling and Marketing

Sustainable  
HERBS INITIATIVE

WHO WE ARE ▾ WHAT WE DO ▾ KNOWLEDGE CENTER ▾ TAKE ACTION ▾ DONATE

Do you know  
where your herbs  
are from?

*Do you know why it matters?*

LEARN MORE



Healthy Ecosystem/Biodiversity



Healthy Soil/Biodiversity



Dignified livelihood. Thriving Communities

## Challenges to Sourcing



“People don’t want to do this hard work anymore. Skilled collectors have left the villages.”

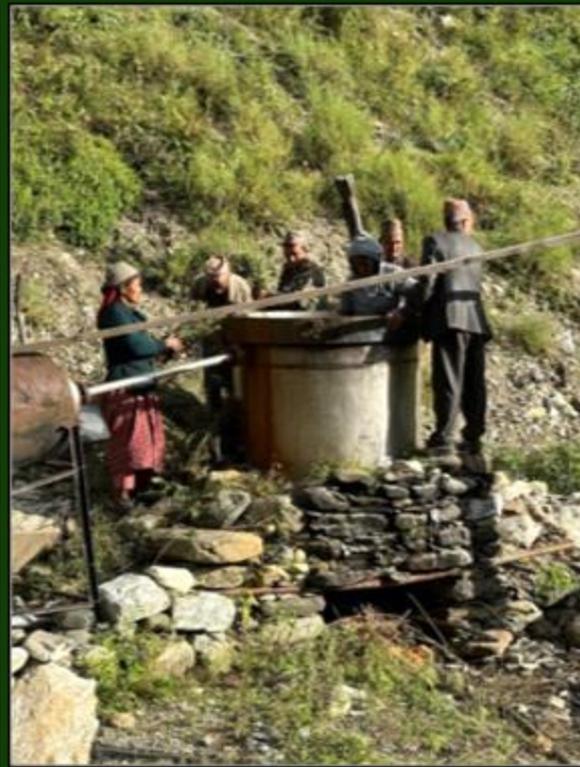
Khilendra Gurung, Himalayan Biotrade



“Working in such remote areas is difficult. But if we don’t act now, the resources we have might disappear—or even go extinct in a decade. It’s not just about losing a species, but also about losing people’s livelihoods.”

– Nabine, ANSAB





- Demand shifts unpredictably: one year a product is in demand, the next year it isn't.
- Processing companies squeezed. "We are tools."
- Hope certifications like Fair Wild, organic, and Fair for Life will connect them to ethical global markets.
- Volumes for certified material rarely big enough to make a difference.
- Biggest markets little awareness of sustainability/fair trade.

# Smallholder farmers, what they need for support

- Contracts
- Pre-financing
- Training
- ...



# Processors and Ingredient Suppliers



- Contracts
- Pre-financing
- Certification support
- Longterm relationships
- ...

“If it’s cheap, something is wrong with it”

- Steven Yeager, Mountain Rose Herbs

“It is difficult to get a man to understand something,  
when his salary depends on his not understanding it.”

— Upton Sinclair

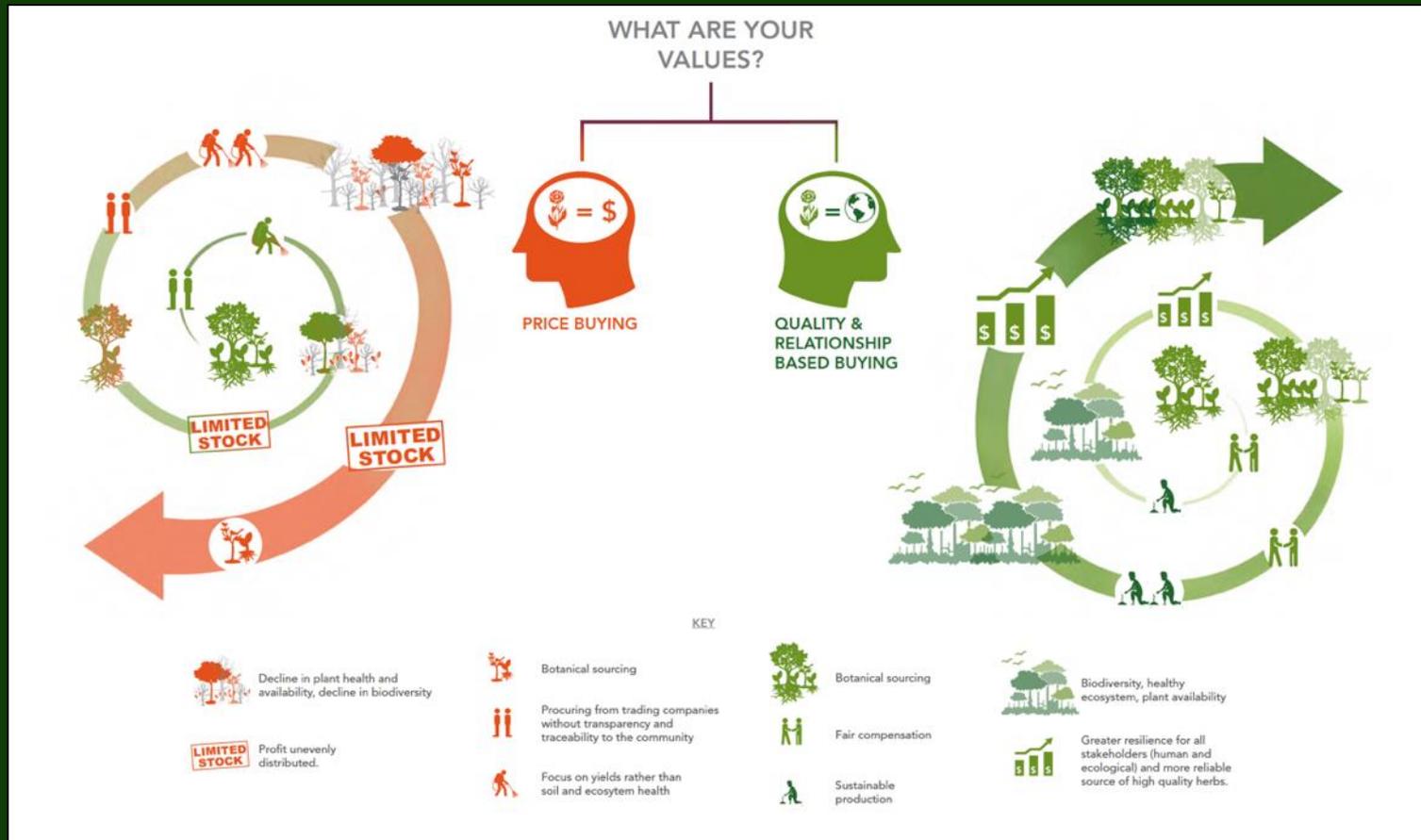
# Barriers to Sourcing More Directly

- No one willing to pay higher prices
- Quality, challenges with documentation, consistency
- Too few people in companies managing complex sourcing.
- Site visits cost a lot
- Staff turnover
- Lack of awareness about the value of more direct relationships (especially but not only in terms of quality).
- How find them?
- Equipment
- Customers fixated on certifications
- ....



“The Great Work” – reimagining our institutions to serve life rather than diminish it.

-- Thomas Berry



Infographic by Lillian Luu

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“Systems need to be managed not only for productivity or stability, they also need to be **managed for resilience** – the ability to recover from perturbation, the ability to restore or repair themselves...

Loss of resilience can come as a surprise, because the system usually is paying **much more attention to its play** than its **playing space.**”

- Donella Meadows *Thinking in Systems*

“It's easy to make the business case when you look at the bigger picture.”

- Briana Buckles, Yogi

What is the playing space –  
or context - for the play – or  
sourcing herbs?

## The playing space for the herb industry: increasing global supply chain risks:

- **Anthropogenic contamination of crops**
- **Changing socio-economic conditions**
- **Climate change disruption**
- **Disappearance of pollinators**
- **Geopolitical unrest**
- **Loss of habitat**

From Josef Brinckmann, "Biological and Cultural Diversity Sustainable Wild Collection of Medicinal Plants," April 27, 2023.

Intercropped medicinal plants,  
outside Coimbatore, India.

## The playing space or context for the herb industry:

- **Rise of authoritarian rule around the world that does not care about biodiversity or sustainability or climate.**
- **Changing and unpredictable socio-economic conditions. Tariffs.**
- **Can't count on governments or international treaties to do what is right. Regulations not achieving what intended to achieve.**
- **Environmental disruption - climate/pollinators/loss of habitat etc.**
- **Geopolitical unrest**
- **Urban migration**



# Making the Business Case: Euromed

- Emerging challenges – hurricanes/heavy rains damaging fruit/disrupting harvest
- Extended droughts, reduced fruit development and lower yields
- Irregular flowering and fruit maturation; shorter collection windows
- Potential shortages and increased costs in supply chain



**Reduced supply, higher costs, and more incentives for adulteration**





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## Quality Impact of Weather Variability

- Harvesting too early leads to lower total fatty acids and poor quality oil
- Excessive rain/storms can damage berries/affect composition
- Weather extremes increase variability batch-to-batch, making quality control and extract production more challenging



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*Citation: Anna Mula, "Ensuring authentic and sustainable botanical ingredients in a challenging market and changing climate."*

# Euromed Actions



- Collaboration with local harvesters to protect wild populations
- Good harvesting practices to avoid over exploitation
- Investment in research on agronomic practices and climate resilience
- Support for long-term ecosystem conservation

Citation: Anna Mula, "Ensuring authentic and sustainable botanical ingredients in a challenging market and changing climate."

# Making the Business Case: Quality



“I am a businesswoman. As long as they aren’t happy and I don’t understand their feelings, they aren’t going to do good work. It won’t be a healthy environment. To make it be a healthy environment, I have to understand their feelings.”

– Sulochana Shrestha, Organic Valley, Nepal



# Making the Business Case: Who Will Do the Work?

“A key goal is not only to retain the next generation but to empower them by ensuring they have the proper equipment, knowledge, and tools to carry out this work in the future. **If you remove all other factors such as biodiversity and climate change and focus solely on stock availability, supporting the next generation is critically important...**”

Who will harvest wild plants if all the young people from a given village have emigrated abroad? Without them, there simply won't be any raw material available for us to purchase.”

- Marin Anastasov, Traditional Medicinals



“Invest in growers and harvesters. You can make a higher product if you start at the beginning. It is much harder to do it later.”

Steven Yeager,  
Mountain Rose Herbs



# How to Support Wild Harvesters



- Dignity
- Training
- Equipment
- Facilities
- Sanitation
- Education
- Fundraising

# Community Capitals

A framework to capture the multi-dimensional nature of a system and how sourcing herbs impacts that system.

For each capital, ask does sourcing herbs regenerate or undermine the resilience and long-term health and viability of that part of the system?



# Community Capitals Case Studies: Supporting Resilient Communities

- Gaia/Doselva – Nicaragua
- Afrigetis – South Africa
- Pebani – Peru
- EcoSo Dynamics - Namibia

Sustainable Herbs Program  CASE STUDY Series #1

## Doselva & Gaia Herbs Partnership in Nicaragua: Producing Regeneratively Farmed Turmeric and Ginger

*Rural Development through Turmeric and Ginger Farming in Nicaragua: A case study using the Community Capitals Framework*



Turmeric, Curcuma longa  
Photo ©2023 Steven Foster Group

By  
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### Introduction

This Case Study uses the Community Capitals Framework (CCF), which looks at supporting community development through seven capitals. It is part of the Sustainable Herbs Program Learning Lab series. The purpose is to find a framework that captures the multi-dimensional nature of community life and the ways participating in the supply network of botanicals impacts that multi-dimensional context.

This first case study is presented as a prototype to begin framing these impacts. This case study is based on preliminary research and interviews with some but not all of the key stakeholders. The goal with these case studies is less to provide all of the details, especially since many of the initiatives are in early stages, and more to share examples of the different types of impacts that are important to assess the different types of partnerships that can lead to these impacts. SHP is sharing them to inspire further research, discussion, and action – particularly around addressing the unique challenges of addressing living income with farmers for whom that income is only part of a larger livelihood.

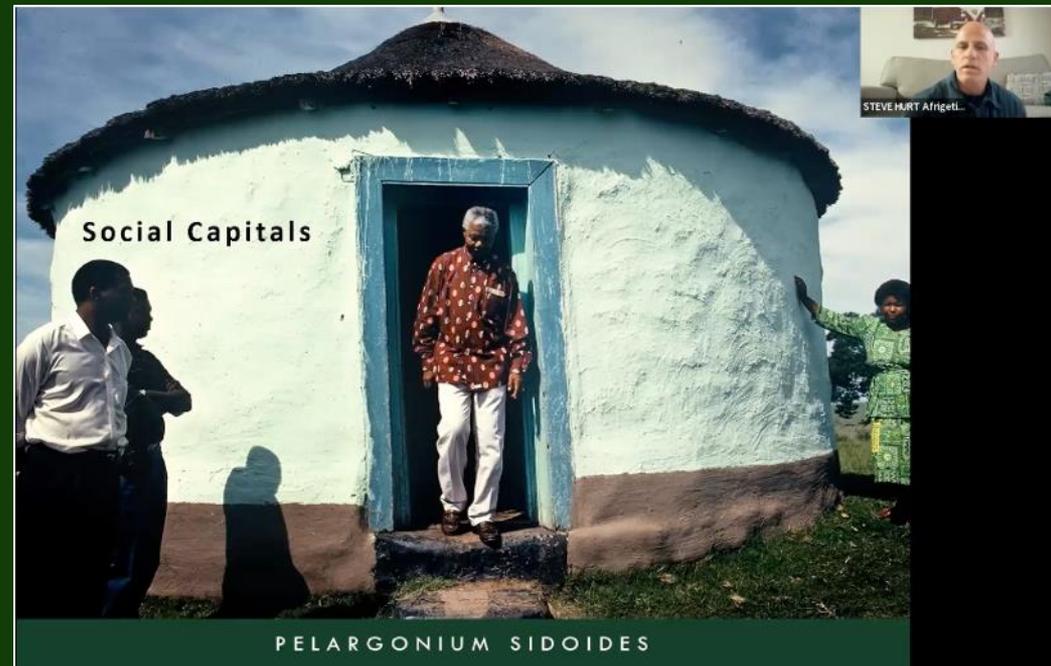
### SHP Learning Lab Mission

The SHP Learning Lab is committed to pushing the boundaries of partnership in the botanical industry. Participants in the Learning Lab are committed to nurturing relationships based on trust, on telling the truth, on respect (for people, for plants, for the planet), and on cooperation.

Participants in the SHP Learning Lab are aligned in their commitment to growing companies that source high quality botanicals in ways that enhance biodiversity, support smallholder farmers and wild collector communities, and reduce carbon impact. And, the participants are



Farmer looking at the Gaia Turmeric Supreme capsules made with turmeric he supplied locally.  
Photo ©2023 Ann Armbrecht



“It would be sick and twisted if in harvesting the medicines from this region and selling them to others, this community isn’t healed.”

- Lorie Briscoe, Herbalist, Bristol, Virginia



