

HAFL Master's Thesis Abstract

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Original Title:

Analysis of the Thanakha's market potential through the implementation of Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) and BioTrade principles in Myanmar

Summary in original language:

World's demand for biological resources as natural ingredients is growing rapidly. This creates new opportunities but also threats for local biodiversity and its associated traditional knowledge (TK). Myanmar, belonging to the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot, is amongst the most biologically diverse countries in the World, hence many plants can be used for commercial purposes. The Nagoya Protocol (NP) on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) safeguards access to genetic resources (GR) and its associated TK, in exchange of sharing the benefits derived from their use with the country of origin and the involved local communities. The NP was signed by Myanmar in 2014, but its implementation is still at a very early stage.

The main objective of this thesis is to analyze the potential of implementing ABS or other measures for promoting sustainable development of Thanakha, as a high-export potential natural BioTrade product from Myanmar.

A mix research design was implemented. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews (n=17) to key informants (KIs) involved in ABS implementation in Myanmar. Quantitative data was collected through individual structured interviews (n=35) to Thanakha farmers in 5 different townships of Myanmar's Dry Zone. Other actors involved along Thanakha Value Chain were also interviewed (intermediates, processors, and manufacturers).

Results argued that, while there is a weak legal and institutional framework currently dealing with ABS implementation, the presence of international projects supporting the process, as well as some initiatives for the inclusion of ABS provisions inside national laws and policies, generate opportunities for further NP implementation. Regarding Thanakha Value Chain (VC), while current research and development (R&D) activities at manufacturing level could trigger ABS obligations, the low awareness about ABS requirements and lack of traceability raise uncertainties for potential implementation. The main aspects identified regarding benefit sharing practices at Thanakha farmer level are highlighted as follows: low level of traceability along the value chain, low/medium access to relevant information by the farmers, low access to fair prices by farmers, low commitment of companies with local development, and inexistence of any type of agreement when sourcing Thanakha for R&D purpose.



This study showed the relevance of implementing BioTrade principles and ethical sourcing practices for promoting sustainable trade of Thanakha as well as supporting the implementation of ABS requirements in Myanmar. Alternative opportunities for sustainable development of Thanakha VC could be linked to the creation of Geographical Indications, or Intellectual Property Rights of Traditional Varieties breeders.

Keywords: Biodiversity; Access and benefit sharing; BioTrade; Thanakha; Myanmar

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