

Herbal product exports yet to extract real value

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Non-standardisation and lack of technical documentation are hurting exports of herbal products.

The country, blessed with 16 agro climatic zones, 45,000 plant species and 15,000 medicinal plants, has a good potential to export herbal products. Non-acceptance by the medical profession in developed countries owing to lack of technical documentation is, however, hindering their exports.

"To address this issue, the Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP) has made an effort to forge links with farmers, entrepreneurs and research scientists," said Suman Preet

Singh Khanuja, director, CIMAP.

Supporting this move, R K Agarwal, chairman and managing director of Natural Remedies, said, "The Indian herbal extracts industry has grown over the years and is today estimated at between Rs 500 crore and Rs 600 crore. The biggest concern is to establish the efficacy of Indian medicinal plants on modern scientific terms and produce extracts in hygienically maintained good manufacturing facilities," he added.

According to independent estimates, the industry can also impact many farm families who have opted for contract farming of medicinal plants.

Companies such as Himalaya Drugs, Sami Labs,

Natural Remedies have ventured into contract farming by taking advantage of agro climatic zones.

The Indian system of medicine has identified 1,500 medicinal plants, of which 500 are commonly used, and more than 150 species have been categorised as endangered.

Places around Coimbatore, Salem and Tirupur in Tamil Nadu, a few areas in Kerala, Tumkur and Chamarajnagar districts in Karnataka, parts of Pune in Maharashtra and Himalayan states such as Uttranchal, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh have shown progress in sustainable contract farming of herbs.

Ayurveda and Siddha

products and services are large drivers of herbal plant cultivation and extraction. "Ayurveda uses 7,000 plants, unani medicine 700, sidha 600, homoeopathy 450 and modern medicine only 30", said Prashant S Acharya of Arth Ayurvedic Health Centre at Bangalore.

The global herbal market is estimated at \$65 billion and India's share is only \$1 billion. Global demand for herbal products has been growing steadily at 15 per cent per annum.

World Health Organisation (WHO) projects the global herbal products market at \$5 trillion by 2050. It also affirms that over 80 per cent of the world population relies on the traditional systems of medicine, largely plant based, to meet their primary health

LOOSE PROPERTIES

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care needs. Given this opportunity, the industry needs to focus on the development of packages and services that can be exported, and project Ayurveda and Siddha as complete healthcare systems, stated Export-Import Bank of India in its report 'Exporting Indian

Healthcare'. The report stated, "There is an imperative need to consolidate, mobilise and organise the sector. With the global market growing at a much faster rate than the domestic market, the Ayurveda and Siddha manufacturers need to orient themselves to export needs."