An ocean of opportunity for sea buckthorn

Specific Support Action

Background/description of problem

Native to Europe and Asia, sea buckthorn *(Hippophae rhamnoides)* is rich in bioactive compounds, such as vitamins, minerals and essential oils. Used for centuries in Russian and traditional Chinese medicine, the plant offers potential as raw material for premium food, cosmetic and pharmaceutical products. However, commercial cultivation and exploitation is poorly developed in Eastern Europe and Asia due to a lack of know-how in harvesting and processing technologies and marketing. In Europe, there is a shortage of raw material.

Project profile

EAN-SEABUCK will establish a co-operation network between Europe and Asia, including Russia and the newly independent states, to improve technical knowledge and know-how on sea buckthorn production, from cultivation and harvesting to processing and product development. It will assess the current research, production and marketing situation, identifying the best available technologies. It will design training modules to reach the widest possible audience, collecting feedback to optimise training effectiveness.

International aspects

EAN-SEABUCK aims to establish an integral co-operation network between Europe, Russia and Asia for the joint sustainable utilisation of sea buckthorn. In this way, a win-win situation will be achieved by mobilising the scientific and technological capacities of the European Union to the benefit of the international community.

Socio-economic significance

EAN-SEABUCK will have the following long-term socio-economic impact:

- Mining the enormous economic potential of sea buckthorn
- Providing economic alternatives for people in rural areas
- Pre-empt competition from other parts of the world, such as the United States
- Reduce costs for preventive healthcare products.

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Basic project information

Full project title: Establishment of European-Asian network for the development of strategies to enhance the sustainable use of sea buckthorn
Duration: 24 months
Starting year: 2005
EU funding: €501 670
FP6 instrument used: Specific Support Action
Project coordinator:
Maria Hermoso
Technologie-Transfer-Zentrum (TTZ), Food Department
Germany
mhermoso@ttz-Bremerhaven.de
Third country partner(s) involved:
International Centre of Research and Training on Sea Buckthorn (China)
Northern Research Institute of Forestry (Russia)
Project website: http://www.eanseabuck.com
EC scientific officer: Jean-François Maljean, Jean-Francois.MALJEAN@cec.eu.int

Scientific significance

The project will contribute to the following scientific areas:

- Improve sea buckthorn harvesting and processing technologies to maximise vitamin, flavonoid, essential oil, and fatty acid content
- Sea buckthorn grows on poor, sandy soils, fixes nitrogen, can tolerate high pH levels, extreme temperatures and salinity. Consequently, it protects against wind and water erosion.

Project outcomes

- Generate sustainable production of sea buckthorn, based on low-input farming with good yields
- Will lead to production of new health-beneficial products complying with European quality and safety standards
- European industry will have access to larger resources of natural raw material rich in bio-active compounds
- Develop a market for the European equipment industry (harvesting and processing).