

Natura

Natura is a Brazilian company whose main technological platform is based on the use of Brazil's biodiversity components and on the combination of traditional knowledge, science, and technology. As a leader in the domestic cosmetics market, as well as in fragrances and personal hygiene the company holds 23% of the market shares. Five thousand employees and net revenues of US\$1,27 billion in 2006 demonstrate the company's innovative role in production.

In 2000 Natura founded the Ekos cosmetics line, which draws from the wealth of Brazil's biodiversity and is inspired by traditional uses of plant ingredients. Today many other company lines follow that path. For purchasing the ingredients Natura has established partnerships with local communities in the Amazon Region and in the Atlantic Rain Forest of Brazil. Agreements have been signed with the partners on sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and fair trade arrangements, such as upfront payments and market prices. The sustainability concept is part of Natura's corporate culture. The company looks to maintain and to improve social and environmental conditions, minimizing potentially harmful actions and disseminating to other companies the good practices acquired in the experience of socio-environmental management.

Ingredients, which are being used for the Ekos line are e.g. two plants called "Breu Branco" and "Pripioca". Both plants were found by Natura staff in 2001 in a local market in the Amazon region. Breu Branco, a resin produced from insect-damaged trees and traditionally used as incense and in art work and handicrafts, became an ingredient in a fragrance. Also Pripioca, traditionally used as a perfume, and now grown in certified sustainable small local farms fostered by Natura, is used in a fragrance.

Through working closely with the communities Natura secures the delivery of adequate quantities of raw materials to ensure its own production. The communities benefit from the secured revenues and support for the establishment of developing plans for sustainable use of the plants as well as of the funds available.

When Natura started using traditional knowledge for the utilisation of ingredients, a legal framework for Access and Benefit Sharing had not existed in Brazil. The cooperation was initially based verbally concluded agreements. Over time local communities became more aware of the importance of being compensated for their traditional knowledge. As a first step Natura negotiated an agreement with a women's association, holder of the applied knowledge. The agreement follows the guidelines of the CBD and the existing national policy on Access and Benefit Sharing. Even though it has not yet been approved by the National authority, Natura compensates the community for the use of its traditional knowledge through an upfront payment and supported other community economic activities.

Through this process Natura has not only built its own capacity to deal with prior informed consent associated with traditional knowledge but also developed ways to engage with local groups to achieve a truly informed consent. In addition the company has started activities to explain the Brazilian Access and Benefit Sharing legislation through e.g. theatrical performances and hiring economists and lawyers selected by the communities to work on their behalf.