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Nepalese Chiuri Butter

Introduction

Chiuri butter, or “ghee”, is the main product of the seeds of *Diploknema butyracea*, a deciduous, medium sized tree native to Nepal (Himalayan Bio Trade Pvt. Ltm, n.d). If the full potential of this product were realized, it would significantly improve the livelihoods of Nepalese people while providing income security and sustainability of those livelihoods (Poudyal, 2014). Due to the specialized manufacturing process, there is also capability of producing diverse products from the butter depending on the target markets.

Production Process of Chiuri Butter

The first step in the production process is collecting the fruit in order to obtain the seeds for processing (Himalayan Bio Trade Pvt. Ltm, n.d). This involves harvesting the fruit that has fallen as well as climbing the trees to access the seeds that remain (Himalayan Bio Trade Pvt. Ltm, n.d). The seeds are first cleaned and dried, and then crushed with a “Dhiki”, a traditional grinding tool, into a fine powder (Koirala, 2009). Next, they are placed on a pan and steamed (Koirala, 2009). Lastly, a traditional oil expeller, a “Chepuwa”, is used and the final product undergoes a purification process to render it edible (Gurung, 2008).

There are three main problems that have been identified with the traditional methods of processing Chiuri Butter which are critical to address. For one, climbing

the trees to collect the nuts is a very precarious operation in which many producers fall from the trees and suffer serious injury (Gurung, 2008). Secondly, Koles, the traditional oil expellers that are used, are very inefficient, yielding only 38% of oil from the tree nuts (appropedia.org, 2010). Thirdly, the process of drying and steaming the seeds requires a substantial amount of fuel wood (Koirala, 2009).

Indigenous Uses and Cultural Relevance of Chiuri Butter

Chiuri ghee, another name for Chiuri Butter, is the primary source of cooking oil for over a hundred thousand Nepalese people, and the pulp of the fruit is commonly consumed as a refreshing juice with high nutritional value (Gurung, 2008). Indigenous people also harvest and consume Chiuri products for their various medicinal properties such as its effectiveness in treating rheumatic pain, indigestion, skin infections and headaches (Gurung, 2008). In addition, the waste is often recycled for its effective pesticide properties and used as manure (Gurung, 2008).

There is an immense body of indigenous knowledge surrounding Chiuri Butter, particularly amongst the Chepang people, who inhabit 3 districts of Nepal (Poudyal, 2014). It is customary for Chepang people to give a Chiuri tree as dowry, therefore, to these communities it holds great cultural value (Gurung, 2008; Poudyal, 2014). Because of this fact, it is regarded as a private resource by the Chepangs and therefore, more research is needed in order to understand how the marketing of Chiuri may affect these communities (Gurung, 2008).

Potential for Production Diversification

Chiuri Butter has many properties that can be utilized to develop a wide range of products. For one, it has many medicinal properties that could be utilized in natural treatment of rheumatic pain, indigestion, skin infections and headaches (Himalayan Bio Trade Pvt. Ltm, n.d). Secondly, it is an appropriate alternative to Shea butter in cosmetics for its moisturizing properties and pleasant scent (Himalayan Bio Trade Pvt. Ltm, n.d). In addition, it has potential in soap making, candle manufacturing and cooking oil (Himalayan Bio Trade Pvt. Ltm, n.d).

The Role of Gender in the Production Process of Chiuri Butter

Increasing the production of Chiuri and expanding the market could have significant positive impacts on the livelihoods of female farmers in Nepal. For one, it would provide grounds for entrepreneurship building and marketing training in which women could take part (appropedia.org, 2010). Secondly, women are the ones who dominantly possess the knowledge of the domestic use and medicinal properties of Chiuri butter (Koirala, 2009). Therefore, it would require women's knowledge to diversify products for export providing a source of empowerment for women. Research in the future should be tailored towards understanding women's potential role in the production and export process in order develop programs to benefit female livelihoods.

Environmental Sustainability

The production of Chiuri butter, even if increased, is an environmentally sustainable practice. The Chiuri tree is indigenous to Nepal and is found in abundance in 50 regions across the country, the total number of trees estimated to be 10.8 million with the potential to produce 37,000 MT of butter per year (Himalayan Bio Trade Pvt. Ltm, n.d). In addition, traditional management of this resource is incredibly well developed (Koirala, 2009; Poudyal, 2014). Therefore if greater market production adheres to traditional knowledge on sustainable forest management, the outcomes will be environmentally sustainable (Koirala, 2009).

Recommendations

There is great potential for increased production of Chiuri butter to support local farmers and improve their livelihoods, however, in order to maximize the benefits to Nepalese farmers, the production process of Chiuri butter must be improved (Shakya, 2000). The high fuel requirements, precariousness of harvesting, and inefficiency of traditional oil extraction must be addressed through small scale interventions using low cost technologies (Gurung, 2008). It has also been suggested that a wide networking of communities would be beneficial to the efficient collection of Chiuri seeds although further inquiry is needed on this topic (Rai, 2014).

Export Potential

Chiuri butter is a unique and natural product of Nepal that holds a competitive niche in the International marketplace. Specifically, it has immense

potential for successful long-term access to the Canadian market place because it heeds to the trends of Canadian consumers (TFO Canada, n.d). Firstly, it adheres to the growing value and consumption of natural health products in Canada (NHP) (TFO Canada, n.d). It also has an advantage as an organic food oil, a market that was valued at \$3 billion as of 2012, as well as in the cosmetic, spa and beauty industries, a market that is expected to experience 5-6% growth annually (TFO Canada, n.d). In order to be sold as a natural health product in Canada, it must have a product license (TFO Canada, n.d). Also, for Chiuri butter to be effective in these, as well as other, potential sectors, it must obtain organic and fair trade certification.

Furthermore, necessary certificates for exporting goods to Canada include an International Import Certificate, a Phytosanitary Certificate, a Certificate of Origin and the required paper work to clear Nepalese customs (TFO Canada, n.d). The transportation of Chiuri butter would be required to maintain a temperature of a maximum of 48 degree centigrade up to which it remains solid, storing for over 2 months without treatment or refrigeration (Gurung, 2008). Because of its unique properties, there are incredible amounts of Canadian suppliers who would be willing to supply Chiuri butter, 8 of who's contact information is available on the following page. Lastly, there are many suppliers and academics in Nepal who have expressed interested in helping to realize the potential of Chiuri butter in the International market, the contacts of whom are also provided on the following page. Thus, there is incredible potential for Chiuri butter to thrive as an export to Canadian markets.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Chiuri butter has significant realizable potential for success in International markets, specifically in Canada. Although there are many drawbacks to the production of Chiuri butter, there are many ways in which they can be resolved, which is where research is ultimately most needed. With proper certification and labeling, Chiuri butter will have great success on the shelves of Western nations.

Bibliography

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Potential Canadian Companies for Importing of Chiuri Butter

- <http://organiquecosmetics.ca/>
- <http://www.qualityfirst.on.ca/products.htm>
- <http://www.puritylife.com/aboutus-values.php>
- http://www.cranberrylanenaturalbeauty.com/?utm_source=cranberrylane&utm_medium=main-page-red-buttons&utm_term=main-site&utm_content=med-links&utm_campaign=main-site-links
- http://www.nhddirect.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=66&Itemid=53
- <http://www.thebodyshop.ca/en/index.aspx>
- <http://www.lush.ca/>
- <http://www.aveda.com/discover/index.tmpl#section=mission>

