

www.cropwatch.org



THE FIRST TRULY INDEPENDENT WATCHDOG FOR THOSE
WORKING WITH NATURAL AROMATIC MATERIALS

E: info@cropwatch.org T: ++44 (0)7771 872 521

Cropwatch Five Years on: Part 1. Threatened Natural Aromatic Species.

[Slightly updated 08.08]

Cropwatch came into being around 2003-2004 in order to directly address concerns about the over-exploitation of natural aromatic ingredients, and their over-regulation by officials prone to the excessive influences of lobbyists from the pharmaceutical & chemical industries, from toxicologists & dermatologists, and, as we have learned to our considerable dismay, from various environmental groups. At present Cropwatch remains independent & non-financed, but with a level of popular support which we believe is (conservatively) over twenty times that of any industry-financed organisation. In order to summarise progress over the past 5 years or so of Cropwatch's activities, we have divided the reporting into two parts: this part reporting on threatened natural aromatic species, and the second (in preparation) looking at the non-transparent world surrounding the over-regulation of our natural aromatic materials.

Threatened species.

Since the essential oils industry/aroma trade has generally been either too shy to come clean about its use of commodities from threatened species, or is actually in denial about it, Cropwatch decided to write an article on the subject for the *Endangered Species Update* magazine in 2003 (see <http://www.cropwatch.org/unethical.htm>). This was well-received at the time, and article reviews were featured in leading trade magazines such as *Soap, Perfumery & Cosmetics*. Further work challenging individual companies who sell or use commodities from rare or threatened species has been on-going since 2003, with some limited measure of success, but when challenged these companies invariably fake surprise, become hostile or defensive, or plead ignorance.

Our major work in this area is the "Update on threatened aromatic plants used in the aroma & cosmetic industries" now in its corrected, expanded and updated 5th revision (93pp), and Cropwatch has the IUCN's express permission to quote the Red List Status of the individual aromatic species identified. This 5th version includes an extended section on natural product status, & a revision of the alphabetical data-base of threatened species, including rosewood oil (see below

for URL). Most of the points we need to make at this juncture are contained within this document. In the introductory lead-in, we quote Bobbi Low (2004) from the periodical *Threatened Species*: “Many problems in managing and protecting endangered species arise not from our ignorance of the species’ ecology, but from human conflicts of interest”.

Nevertheless, to counter any claims of ignorance, and also attempting to cover “human conflicts of interest”, Cropwatch decided to make collected information about threatened species available on its website in the wider public interest. To this end we have constructed an on-going series of periodically updated articles and data-bases, which either provide information on the subject, or point to where it can be found. Topics cover so far can be listed out as follows:

Agarwood files – chemistry, botany, microbiology etc. (2004) at:

<http://www.cropwatch.org/agarwood.htm>

Extensive bibliography on agarwood (1st revision 2008; 35pp):

<http://www.cropwatch.org/agarbib2008.pdf>

Extensive sandalwood bibliography (4th revision 2008: 67pp):

<http://www.cropwatch.org/santalum.pdf>

Ambergris article (2005) at: <http://www.cropwatch.org/ambergris.htm> and (2006):

<http://www.cropwatch.org/ambergrisupdate.htm>

A short note on the ecological status of Cedarwood Atlas (2004):

<http://www.cropwatch.org/cedarwood.htm>

Update on threatened aromatic plants used in the aroma & cosmetic industries (5th revision 2008; 93pp):

<http://www.cropwatch.org/v105.pdf>

Exploited trees: some brief sketches (2006):

<http://www.cropwatch.org/cropwatch13.htm>

Threatened sp. cont’d: the Brazilian Candeia Plant (*Eremanthus erythropappus*)(2007):

<http://www.cropwatch.org/newslet8.pdf>

Chinese medicine consumes threatened species (2005):

<http://www.cropwatch.org/tigers.htm>

Threatened species: *Coleus forskohlii* revisited (2007):

<http://www.cropwatch.org/newslet8.pdf>

Rosewood sustainability (2004):

<http://www.cropwatch.org/cropwatch6.htm>

Australian sandalwood oil: a tale of spin & hype? (2004):

<http://www.cropwatch.org/cropwatch2.htm>

Documents in preparation include 'Rosewood oil – the real story' and 'Misguided attacks on alternative medicine' which is intended to include the still unfolding gynecomastia - lavender oil - tea tree oil situation. We are also in the process of preparing a 'Threatened species in the natural drug trade' data-base, although this will be a long task. We are always grateful for contributions, corrections or suggestions for any of these items, most of which are-, or intended as-, continuously upgraded living documents.

Sections on sandalwood & agarwood in the "Update on threatened aromatic plants..." particularly, go hand-in-hand with the extensive sandalwood & agarwood bibliographies listed above. You should be able to make your own minds up from some of this data about the claimed sustainability of commodities from certain species, and to learn the identities of some of the companies who are using these commodities.

Adulteration.

Another topic that the aroma industry really doesn't want to talk about is the widespread practice of the adulteration of essential oils and aromatic materials. Cropwatch presented (a subsequently much-plagiarised) account of this practice slightly updated at <http://www.cropwatch.org/adulterationupdate08.pdf>. Whenever natural aromatic commodities go short – as lemon oil is at present, due to widespread global crop failures – the natural ingredient buyer can particularly expect an increased risk of buying substandard, adulterated or blended material. The failure of the IFRA-RIFM-REXPAN hierarchy to have ever investigated the health & safety aspects of adulterated fragrance ingredients is shameful, and clearly illustrates the limitations & no-go areas for trade-funded, non-independent safety organisations. Unfortunately, the hapless regulators of the profession are almost totally dependent on organisations such as these for direction & technical information. But you would all know that already.....

Tony Burfield
Co-founder Cropwatch.