

Novelty foods approval boosts **BAOBAB**

A host of new products containing the fruit pulp of the African baobab tree are set to hit supermarket shelves in SA and abroad in the coming months following novel foods approval by the European Commission in July.

These products include beverages, smoothies, cereal and snack bars, with other possibilities such as biscuits, confectionery and sports drinks to follow.

PhytoTrade Africa, the natural products trade association that represents rural producers in southern Africa, and its technical partner and distributor, Afriplex, have been working for two years to ensure the ingredient's acceptance in Europe.

It is expected that it will pave the way for greater acceptance of other unique African extracts and ingredients, such as the African sausage tree (*Kigelia pinnata*).

Under Europe's novel food regulation (EC No 258/97) introduced in 1997, any food not commonly consumed in Europe prior to May 1997, must undergo strict safety assessment before it can be brought to market.

Riaan van Breda, technical manager for Afriplex says the company is already working with major food companies to develop new innovative products for the European markets.

Market development manager of PhytoTrade Africa, Cyril Lombard, says baobab offers excellent nutritional benefits for consumers, presenting manufacturers with a new opportunity to target the growing market for healthy, natural and Fair Trade foods.

He says baobab fruit pulp is an easy, adaptable and cost effective ingredient to work with and is ideal for cereal bars and smoothies.

The anticipated intake of baobab pulp from products such as smoothies and cereal bars will be around 5-10%, according to preliminary work by Leatherhead Food International.

Baobab has been shown to have a vitamin C content of up to three times that of oranges; only 10g can supply a quarter of the recommended daily vitamin C intake. It has over



ASSISTING RURAL PRODUCERS

PhytoTrade Africa, the southern African natural products trade association, helps rural producers develop and market their natural products for export. The non-profit trade association promotes sustainable production and fair trade, provides marketing and technical advice, research and development and advocacy services for its members.

PhytoTrade Africa represents thousands of rural producers in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe and SA, who market a range of products from confectionery, herbal teas, jams, nutritional supplements and medicinal products to cosmetic oils.

PhytoTrade says it focuses on species that are abundant and that can be collected with minimal environmental impact. Consequently, the fruits and/or seeds are the main parts of the plant that are collected rather than the roots or the bark of a particular species.

Elephant Pepper Baobab Gold Pepper Sauce is a mild, fruity and tangy chilli sauce, whose flavour is subtly enhanced with the citrus notes of baobab fruit powder.

Produced and packaged in SA, the Elephant Pepper range of pepper sauces and accompanying grinders hit Whole Foods supermarket shelves in the US earlier this year.

Through harvesting chillis and baobab fruit from rural farmers across southern Africa, a percentage of sales of Elephant Pepper sauces supports both elephant conservation and community upliftment projects in these areas.

The sauces are available in SA at Constantia Uitsig, and Taste of Africa at both Cape Town and Johannesburg International airports and on www.elephantpepper.com.

The sauces and grinders are produced by Dickon Hall Foods and Cape Herb and Spice, respectively.



FLAVOURS & INGREDIENTS

10 times the level of anti-oxidants found in oranges, contains natural fibre (pectins) and is a good source of calcium (almost 300mg/100g, which is more than spinach) and iron.

Other nutrients include riboflavin, niacin, pectin and citric, malic and succinic acids, while the oil also contains the vitamins A, D and E. The pulp is also reported to be prebiotic and stimulate intestinal microflora.

In Africa, the baobab grows primarily in SA, Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The fruit has a hard shell with a velvety covering that contains the seed, which are hard and dark coloured. This is surrounded by dry, cream coloured fruit pulp forming lumps, which is the product that has now gained novelty food status. Dry, slightly darker fibrous material is also contained within the fruit.

Sustainable wild harvesting of baobab fruit could generate trade worth up to \$1bn/year for African producers, according to a recent report by Ben Bennett of the Natural Resources Institute in Britain.

Lombard says: "Approval for baobab is fantastic news for Africa. Opening up the EU to this product will make a real difference to poor rural communities (there), offering them a potentially life-changing source of income."

Following novel foods approval, PhytoTrade Africa will be focusing resources on supporting the development of the supply chain and production capacity to meet European industry demand.

The trade association expects a four fold increase in demand for baobab fruit pulp this year, and possibly another five fold increase over the next two years.

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