



**SAEOPA**  
Southern African Essential  
Oil Producers' Association

# Essential Oil Express



The pulse of essential oils

Issue No 1 | September 2019

## Essential Oil Conference – Leriba lodge July 2019



A very successful **1<sup>st</sup> South African Conference on Essential and Vegetable oils** was held on 25 and 26 July 2019 at Leriba Lodge, Centurion. The theme was “Industry milestones, sharing successes and demystifying market requirements”. The conference was sponsored by The Department of Trade and Industry and the UNIDO GQSP - SA project.

It was attended by 150 delegates from SADC and 4 International speakers from UK, Australia, USA and Turkey. Neighbouring countries represented were Botswana, Eswatini and Lesotho. Six sessions were held, with question and answer opportunities during the panel discussions. Mr Juan Pablo Davila, Project Manager: GQSP-SA, presented SAEOPA with 8 visual identity items in support of promoting the Association. This included a species brochure, which is a new milestone for SAEOPA since its formation in 2000. Exhibitions of products as well as books were displayed. Time for interacting and networking during breaks and lunch times proved very popular and fruitful. At the end of the first day, SAEOPA's 1<sup>st</sup> annual meeting was held and the way forward was discussed. Standing committees of the board were formed, namely the Strategic Committee, Financial Committee and Audit Committee.

5 students from the AgriSETA shared their experience and the youth were invited to be part of the rapid growth the industry is experiencing globally.



**SAEOPA 2019 BOARD MEMBERS**  
Back: Hendrik Van Gass (Finances), Wim Du Toit (Secretary), Louis Verhoef (Quality control), Obed Nelovholwe (Chairperson), Front: Karen Swanepoel (Executive Director), Phillis Mphogo (Traditional affairs), Nnana Makhubu (Vice-Chairperson), Magda Sly (Marketing)

## AgriSETA students learn about essential oils as part of agro-processing



**Five intern students from AgriSETA have been trained by SAEOPA in primary agriculture, with a focus on industrial crops, e.g. essential and deed oils since February 2019. They graduated in August 2019.**

The students were exposed to several agricultural enterprises involving modern technology and precision farming. Agro-processing was seen as a priority.

During one such field trip, the students went to witness the distillation of Tagete (Kakiebos) in Devon as done by Obed Nelovholwe. He is very experienced and well known in the industry. He explained the process of harvesting with sickles and transporting it in bags to the distillation unit. The unit is operated with electricity for small quantities but a wood burning unit is used for larger volumes. Obed stressed the importance of record keeping in the industry as they saw a demonstration of the weighing of the raw material and measuring the yield for the records.



Distillation is quite technical and safety measures were explained and to be followed throughout the process. Oil is collected and stored in stainless steel, aluminum or glass. Samples were taken and sent to a laboratory for quality testing. Obed has had take-off agreements which he is about to fill. He also shared his marketing experience.

## Ancient herbs and spices for modern times

**‘Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.’ Hippocrates**

There is a trend today to turn back to trusted ancient remedies as modern medicines often have side effects without relieving the symptom or cause it was intended for. North America’s uses Native American herbal medicines such as *Euonymus atropurpureus* (Burning bush), *Grindelia* species (Gumweed), *Sanguinaria canadensis* (Blood root) and *Ulmus rubra* (Slippery elm bark). Africa included the leaves of *Erythroxylum coca* (Coca) – considered a stimulant. *Cola vera* nuts and *Erythroxylum coca* leaves were used as ingredients of an early form of *Coca-Cola*. *Cinchona* species’ barks were acquired in the 1920s – a source of quinine used to cure malaria.

From Asia there is ayurvedic and Chinese medicine, while from India and South East Asia there is *Butea frondosa* to achieve enlightenment. Theraveda Buddhists use *Strychnos nuxvomica* – also known as Poison nut, used in ayurvedic and homeopathic medicinal systems as well as *Cinnamomum species* (Cinnamon), *Glycyrrhiza glabra* (Licorice), *Cassia* buds and *Senna* pods. In the UK, prior to World War II, a range of herbs were added: *Arnica montana*, *Helleborus niger* (Black hellebore), *Calendula officinalis*, *Inula helenium* (Elecampane), *Chrysanthemum* species and *Prunus avium* (Wild cherry) bark. After the war, 1973 species of importance include *Rauwolfia* species (Tropical Africa 1969 and India 1969) – recognised as source of reserpine.

Other exotic plants that were added included *Aloe* species (*Aloe barbadensis*, *A. perryi* and *A. vera*), *Eucalyptus* species, *Maranta arundinacea* (Arrowroot), *Ipomoea* species (Sweet potato), *Iris* species (Orris), *Rheum* species (Chinese rhubarb), *Ricinus communis* (Castor oil fruits), Wild tonka Beans (used in perfumery and source of Coumarin), *Derris* species – considered to have laxative and carminative properties and used for anti-arthritis treatment, *Frangula alnus* (Alder buckthorn), and *Colubrina elliptica* (the bark is used for a popular drink in the West Indies, Maubi).

Local products are winning international awards, and local engineers are exporting equipment to the rest of the world. Local researchers are well known and there are many international collaborators. We are all still young in the world of disease and solutions!

KM SWANEPOEL

## Cosmetics is a nut case!



Cosmetics is the fastest growing application sector of essential and vegetable or seed oils. Indigenous seed oils from Baobab, Kalahari melon, Marula, Ximenia and Mongongo are therefore becoming increasingly popular in cosmetics and hair products. The seed is cold pressed and then tested at an accredited laboratory. Characteristics such as the free fatty acids, peroxidised value, saponification and iodine value will determine the price and specific application. It is potentially a good economic enterprise for rural communities creating jobs.

# Global production of essential oils declining, creating more and new opportunities for Southern African producers

## The State of the Aromatic Plant and Essential Oil Industry

from *Perfumer and Flavourist*, May 2019

While the love affair with all things natural continues on the high street, and more and more fragrances are launched each year, just what is the state of the aromatic plant and essential oil industry at the grassroots level? The answer is, by and large, bad.

Rapidly increasing costs of land and labor and lack of investment for more than 100 years in new plant and equipment means that the essential oil industry is basically much smaller and less developed today than it was when Ernest Guenther travelled the world to research his magnificent book series, "The Essential Oils," which were published in 1948. A quick review of Guenther's works reveals the following remarkable statistics:

- 9,500 hectares of damascene roses were planted in Bulgaria in 1912
- 2,021 tonnes of Mysore sandalwood were distilled in 1927
- **132 tonnes of Reunion geranium were exported in 1938**
- 1,500 tonnes of jasmine flowers were picked in Southern France in 1927
- 95 tonnes of Guyanese rosewood were harvested in 1929
- 1,600 tonnes of Florence orris roots were picked in 1949
- 2,400 hectares of Bergamot were grown in Calabria in 1956
- 300 tonnes of Parma violets were picked in Grasse in 1900
- **8,000 hectares of geraniums were planted in Algeria in 1925**



Today's essential oil industry is a pale shadow of this former glorious past. In many countries, the industry is not much more than a tourist attraction. When one visits the great former centers of global essential oil production like Provence, France, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, Florence, Italy, or even Cairo, Egypt, one will see an industry living off its past glory, selling samples and trinkets, rather than the vibrant value-added agro-industrial sector that it should be. Fragrance and flavor houses may refer to this glorious past in their brochures and promotional material, but may not even spend 10% of their R&D budget on farm technology and agro-forestry research. Admittedly, when a supply problem arises, they may make attempts to overcome bottlenecks by undertaking some ad hoc projects, but a sustained long-term program of global research, development and training in essential oil production and distillation simply does not exist.

**Agricultural Challenges** As Joseph Hunwick, an expert on African natural oils points out, "If you look at the websites of the World Bank, UN Food and Agricultural Organization, the European Commission, and the Asian or African Development Bank you will find it hard to find a single project where aromatic plant breeding, cultivation, storage and processing plays an important part." But, he adds, "Growing and processing essential oil plants is an ideal small-farmer activity where poor and inaccessible farmers can make a reasonable living from a small patch of land." "This cannot be said for green chemistry, however environmentally friendly it may be," says Hirsch. While technological developments in the field of extraction, analysis and fragrance formulation become ever-more sophisticated, the technology used to cultivate and harvest aromatic plants is not very different from what it was 100 years ago.

Author: Denzil Phillips

## 4 Essential tips for first-time essential oil producers

*Essential oil production is not a get-rich-quick scheme. It is also not a joyride making use of a low-risk crop. Many producers have made mistakes and are sharing their experiences so that new producers can save time and money.*

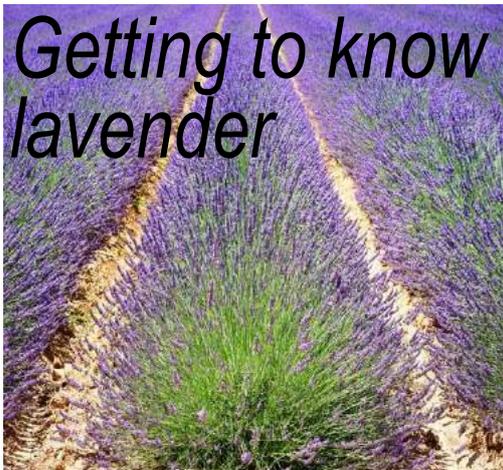
The area to be planted should be carefully chosen. If organic production is preferred, it will have to comply with the regulations for certifications and inspections.

As with any agricultural crop, the market has to be studied and a choice of crop will be made as determined by environmental factors. The viability of the crop will also be determined by the agricultural practices and the marketing strategy. The demand for essential oil is growing at 12-20% per year whereas the supply is not sufficient. South Africa is importing most of the essential oils used in aromatherapy alone.

The pitfalls are reported to be the uncertainty of the crop in climate change, as it is still a niche agricultural commodity, as well as the technical challenge of the distillation process. It is advised to buy plant material from a reliable nursery and distillation unit supplier. The cultivation, including irrigation and fertilization, will differ from crop to crop. Harvesting methods and time will also vary according to the specie and production area.

For more information;

<https://www.daff.gov.za/docs/Brochures/guideessoilcrops.pdf>



The purple haze from a lavender field is a beautiful sight and aroma that will be in one's memory for ever. Lavender oil is still very popular and used in various products. Although a northern hemisphere plant, it is doing exceptionally well in Australia and in the Western Cape. There is different types of plants and it is wise to choose the cultivar with care. The hybrid lavandin is yielding much more oil but as at a lower price than the true lavender. It is one of the safest oils for children, elderly and sensitive people as a calming and relaxing oil. It also blends well with many other oils. For more information <https://www.daff.gov.za/Guidelines%20Lavender.pdf>

**Q:** *Where do I learn more about essential oils and seed oils?*

**A:** *Contact us at SAEOPA*



We assist with information regarding crop selection, cultivation, harvesting and processing. Market and price related issues are shared from our members and international correspondents. We also share research findings and success stories while focusing on the expansion of the industry. Value adding, agro-processing and skills development is part of our mission and actions.



### Essential oil of the month

*Marula oil is cold pressed from the seed of the marula fruit. It is harvested wild and the pulp is removed and the seed washed and dried. The oil is in the seed which has to be removed from the "stones" shown in the above photo. It is very stable and applied in formulations for skin and an excellent moisturizer for the skin in the African sun! Watch this space!*

### Moringa on the market

**The Moringa plant is originally native to Northern India. It is known as the miracle tree today as it spread to eastern India, China and Southeast Asia. Moringa is now widely used and planted in Africa and South Africa has caught up very fast producing good quality moringa powder and oil from the seeds. South Africa is hosting a world conference 10-13 November 2019. For more information: <http://www.ism2019.co.za/>**

### Projections of growth in the essential oil market.

By 2024, the US essential oil market is expected to reach \$7.3 million, compared to \$4.35 million in 2018; while the aroma chemicals market is slated to reach \$6.48 billion by 2023. *Perfumer and Flavorist June 2019*

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