

PRESS RELEASE

Launching Ceremony of the Union of Ethical BioTrade's Representative in South East Asia

Hanoi, 19th August 2019 - Within the framework of the Regional BioTrade Project in South East Asia funded by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) of Switzerland and implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation in Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, HELVETAS Vietnam in collaboration with the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) and the Center for Rural Economy Development (CRED) organised a **Launching Ceremony of UEBT Representative in South East Asia**.

UEBT is a non-profit association that promotes sourcing with respect. UEBT supports and verifies companies' commitments to innovation and sourcing that contribute to a world in which people and biodiversity thrive.

Nowadays, consumers are paying more attention to products made from/of natural ingredients that they use daily, such as foods, personal care and phyto-pharmaceuticals and have a growing awareness of protecting biodiversity. Companies in these sectors use hundreds and sometimes thousands of ingredients from nature in their products. This can include biodiversity-based fragrances, flavours and colorants in food or cosmetics; fruits, herbs and flowers for tea; natural ingredients and oils in skincare; and medicinal herbs. To assure sustainable practices, companies need to have systems in place for ethical sourcing and innovation. UEBT provides guidelines for ethical sourcing systems and give companies a roadmap for implementing such systems. The UEBT Ethical Sourcing System Certification validates that a company has incorporated Ethical BioTrade practices into its systems for sourcing and innovating natural ingredients.

According to Mr. Jonas Grunder, Deputy Head of Cooperation at the Embassy of Switzerland in Vietnam, the presence of UEBT Representative in SEA has confirmed its crucial role in promoting the sustainable collection, production, processing, and commercialization of products derived from native biodiversity. "With SECO's support to the Regional BioTrade project, biodiversity-based products from Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar will be internationally recognized and traded through supply chains that conform to the principles of BioTrade and the objectives of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD). Ultimately, the project contributes to inclusive and sustainable growth of these economies", added Mr. Grunder.

The Standard builds on the BioTrade principles and criteria developed by the UNCTAD BioTrade Initiative and validates best practices of companies committed to ethical sourcing and innovation of natural ingredients for the benefit of people and biodiversity. Companies that adhere to the UEBT standard respond to growing consumer awareness on biodiversity and expectations that companies take actions in this regard. In view of its rich biodiversity and vibrant private sector, Vietnam can position itself as a provider of a wild variety of natural ingredients that are sourced with respect for people and biodiversity. The UEBT/CRED collaboration seeks to support this ambition, said Ms. Simona Damico, representative of UEBT.

Since 2009, UEBT annually measures consumer awareness of biodiversity, and how this affects purchasing decisions. Ten years of research, among 68,000 people from 16 countries, and among hundreds of leading companies, provides valuable insights that may guide companies and governments in their approaches towards people and biodiversity. The UEBT Biodiversity Barometer findings in 2019 show that Asian consumers claim high awareness of biodiversity and expect to see greater corporate social responsibility in protecting biodiversity. A majority of the surveyed Asian consumers also believed that 'companies have a moral obligation to assure they have a positive impact on people and biodiversity', while claiming that they

‘have more faith in a company whose commitment to ethical sourcing biodiversity is verified by independent organisations’.

Under these circumstances, UEBT is expanding its impacts to Asian countries by collaborating with CRED as its Representative in South East Asia. In its new role, CRED will be in charge of i) Raising awareness among partners and businesses about UEBT and the Ethical BioTrade Standard; ii) Advising and supporting the certification process and UEBT membership registration; and iii) Supporting companies with an interest in BioTrade or UEBT membership in the process of organizing production activities, purchasing natural ingredients, building systems to meet the BioTrade standard and principles.

About UEBT

UEBT was created as a multi-stakeholder platform to engage business in BioTrade with the support of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). This was in recognition of the important role that the private sector plays in sustainable use of biodiversity. Today, we operate independently, but maintain strong partnerships with UN organisations such as the UNCTAD BioTrade Initiative and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

UEBT members are companies, cooperatives, farmers and producers in the field of cosmetics, personal care, pharmaceuticals and food, who are committed to practicing UEBT standards and sourcing with respect for people and biodiversity.

For more information about UEBT, please visit: <https://www.ethicalbiotrade.org/>

About HELVETAS Vietnam

HELVETAS is an international development organisation with head offices in Switzerland, Germany, and the USA. In Switzerland, HELVETAS is one of the most experienced and largest development organisations. HELVETAS has been working in Vietnam since 1994 in the sector of Agriculture, Forestry, and Rural Development. Today HELVETAS Vietnam’s programs focus on Sustainable and Inclusive Economies, while specific topics such as Climate Change and Vocational Skills Development also receive more attention.

For more information about HELVETAS Vietnam, please visit: <https://www.helvetas.org/en/vietnam>

About CRED

CRED is a Vietnam-based Non-Profit Organization (NGO), working to ensure greater inclusion of the poor and marginalised groups to take lead in the development of their livelihoods.

Founded in 2014, CRED inherited 20 years of work experience in Development and Trade Cooperation from HELVETAS in Vietnam (1995 – 2015) with diversified activities of project management, consultancy services in the fields of Value chain development for Inclusive growth; Climate-smart Agriculture; Water, Environment and Livelihood improvements.

For more information about CRED, please visit: www.cred.org.vn

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