

28<sup>th</sup> March 2021



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# ‘Future of Frankincense’ on-line survey



**FINAL RESULTS**

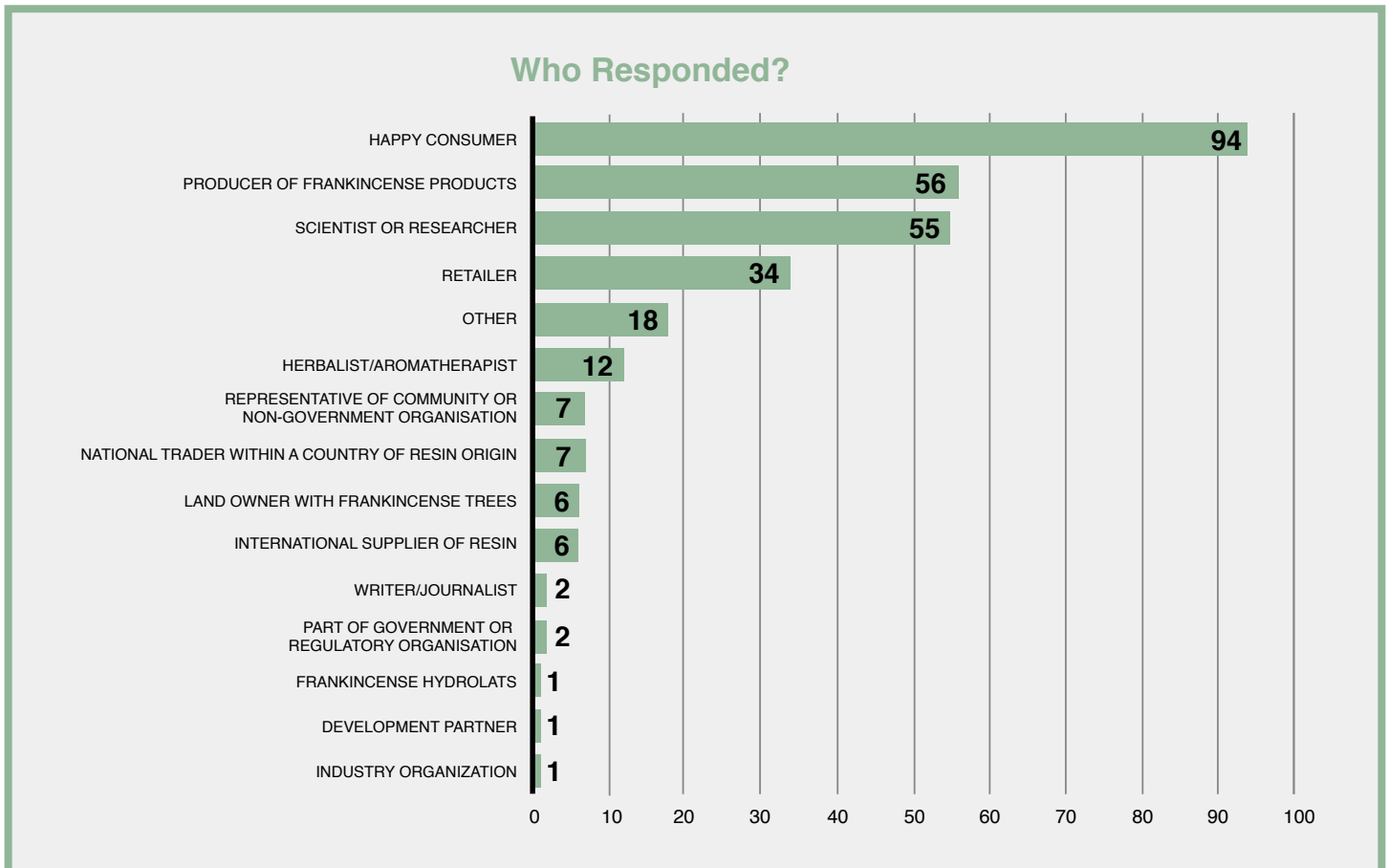
# Background



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An online survey was set up on Google forms to ask would-be participants what they would describe themselves as, what they most want to know, what collective information most needs to be gathered and what do we most need to do? 302 people from over 46 countries responded.

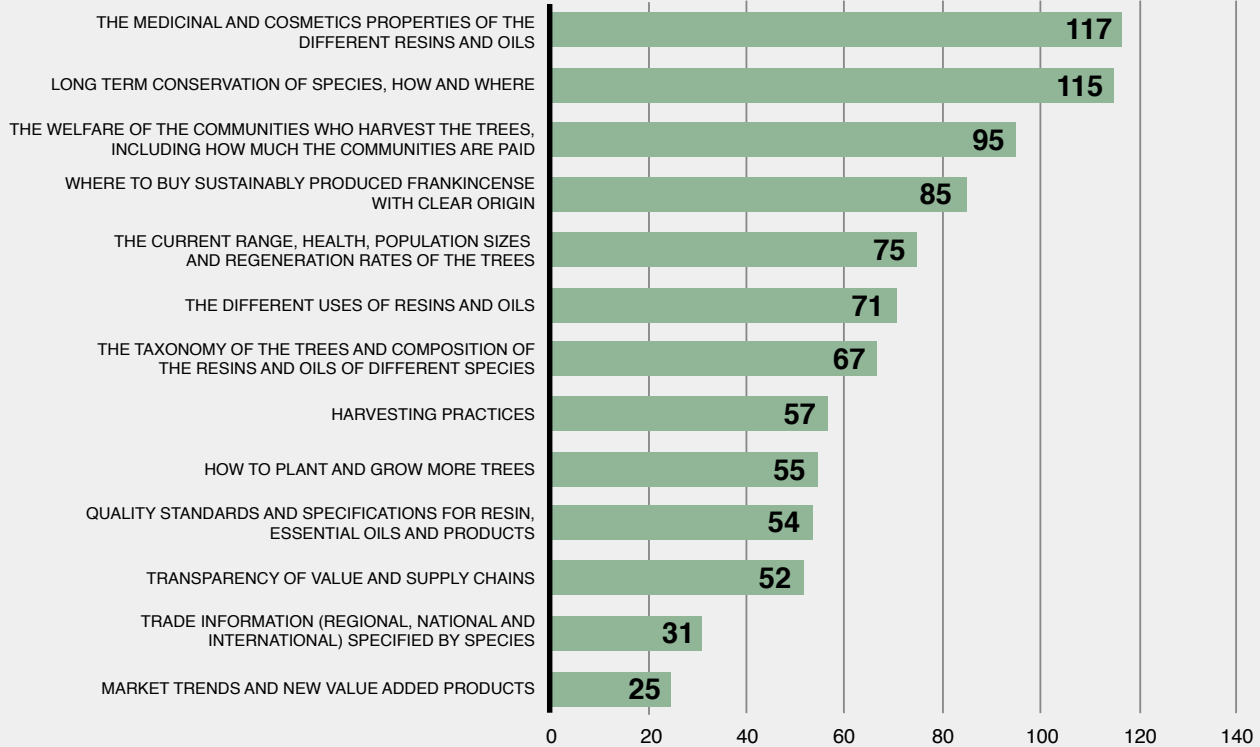
## Who has responded so far?





## The first question asked:

### What do you personally want to know about Frankincense? (Pick three)



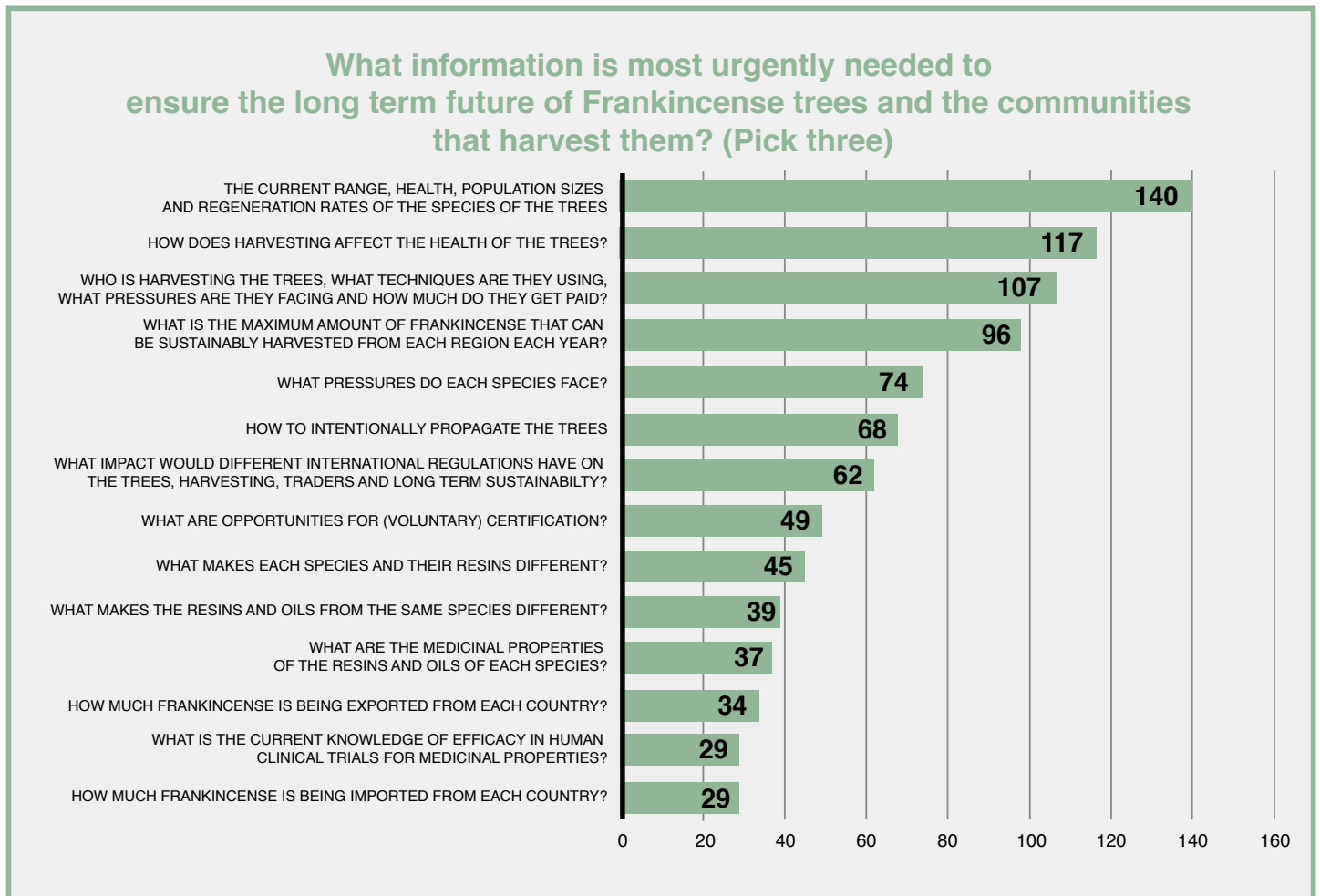
#### Other issues included:

- How to encourage frankincense grove production here in the United States and elsewhere.
- I'm interested in all aspects, including how can we spread these trees so they survive?
- Are there historical and technological reasons behind the frankincense that we found in our home land?
- The frankincense that we found in underground deposits in Somaliland.
- Spiritual traditional uses.
- The genetic diversity of frankincense trees and potential for adaptation.
- Where/how to grow in Southwest USA and all the above.
- More about the day to day lives and cultures of the communities that harvest as well as their well being.

Any other comments are in Annex 1



## The second question asked:



Other issues included:

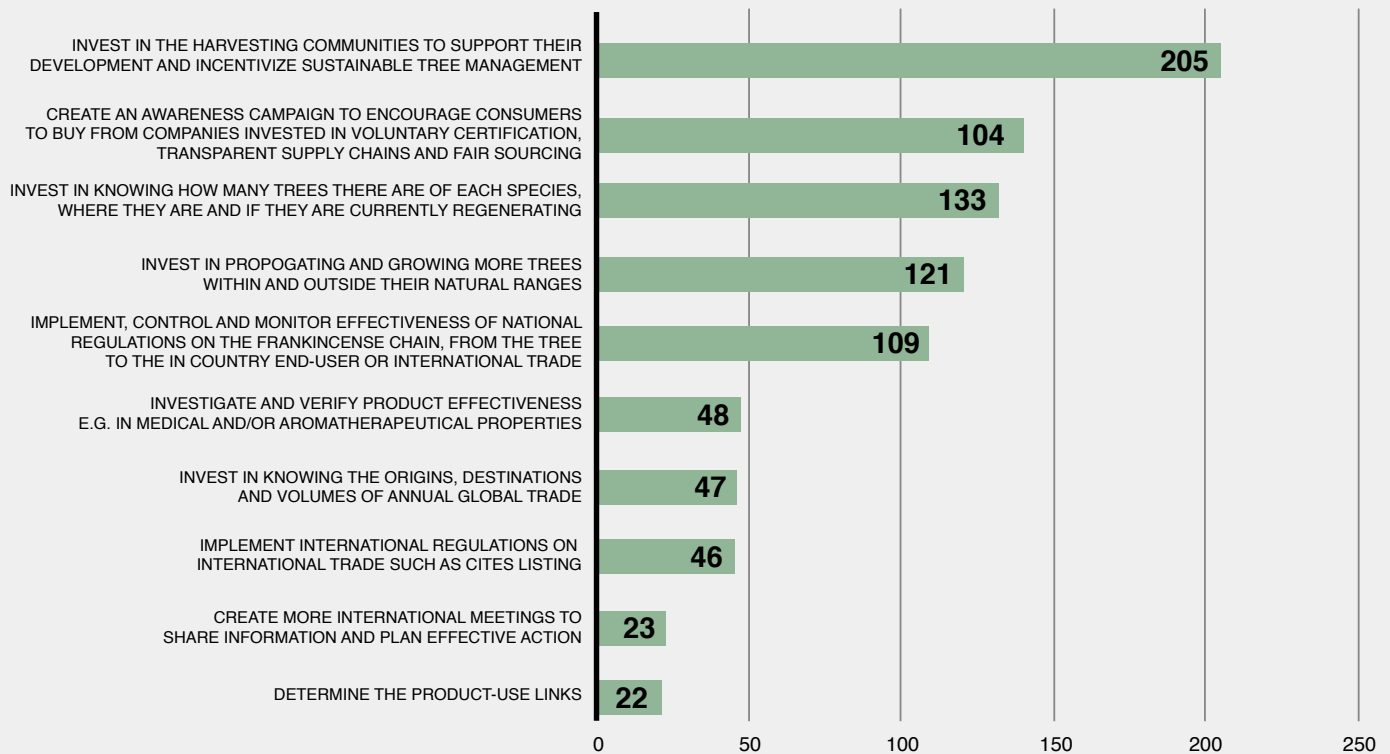
- Again, I think all the above are important- growers/harvesters are in a symbiotic relationship with the trees and their input matters too.
- How long does it take a tree to grow before it can be harvested?
- How can the farming community be fairly compensated and supported?
- Regenerative practices and projects along with current situation.
- How to detect adulteration?
- These are all important.

Any other comments are in Annex 2



## The third question asked:

### What most needs to be done to ensure the long term future of the Frankincense trees and the communities that harvest them? (Pick three)



#### Other issues included:

- All of the above! I would like to see transparency in the end user product companies too.
- All of this and none of it because I'm ignorant :)
- All these indicate outside controls over each country, and it should be locally driven — I don't agree with any three of these but since it's mandatory to answer, but this question is incredibly slanted in favour of a few large companies and not neutral.
- Consider and manage other sources of degradation (crops, livestock).
- Explore options to link buyers to producers and to create economic incentives for producers and countries having Boswellia populations to keep them on the landscape.
- Facilitate legislation that frankincense trees can only be owned/harvested by residents of the countries in which they grow as patrimonial heritage and prohibit multi-national corporation ownership.
- How does sustainability happen?
- Integrated conservation and Protected Areas planning at the national level with appropriate implementation.

- Invest in communities of growers - encourage healthy small traders - grow from bud cuttings. Develop root stocks to take plants into other ranges, while we work on spreading their range again.
- Invest in determining what regions from other countries that frankincense is suitable to grow in, and if there are consequences to native animal and plant species.
- Legal protections for indigenous farmers and communities against corporations.
- Take adulteration out of the market.
- These are all important and inter-related. Too hard to choose without hearing discussion of each.

Any other comments are in Annex 3

## Annex 1: Other comments on ‘What do you personally want to know about Frankincense?’

- Frankincense, myrrh and trees are magical. We need to preserve and sustain their being.
- Life strategies of frankincense trees.
- I need more sustainability for these trees.
- Frankincense has a special place in our hearts and sustainable cultivation is important.
- Everything about frankincense is interesting!
- I also would like to know how to contribute to support frankincense trees.

### *Technical and activity related comments*

- In Sudan and particularly in Darfur less involvement of local communities in resin production, due to lack of motivation and also the lack of good governance by the administrative authorities, are considered to be the main factors that jeopardize the sustainable production of frankincense.
- A comment regarding *B.sacra* in Oman there is not any proper survey taken in the different frankincense lands to determine the deteriorated frankincense lands and the conservative ones till this moment.
- Upgrade livelihood of local community and frankincense harvesters is extremely important. Otherwise no conservation efforts could be possible. As well as to improve harvester’s knowledge and capacity is inevitable.
- How is climate change involved?
- Researching frankincense and other plants in ancient Egypt.
- I would like to know more about the general harvesting practices of frankincense. Also issues around overharvesting.
- Also we need to explore options (i) to improve tenure security of communities managing landscapes with gum bearing species, (ii) to create incentives for companies so that they begin at least partial processing in the producing countries, and (iii) explore and address ecological barriers hindering population establishment of *Boswellia* species.
- We found a frankincense in the suburb of Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland

incidentally which is just like a mine. it has a very pleasant fragrance but we have no idea how this frankincense happened to be there? At the beginning, some members of the community who found it used to sell it but later on we thought it could have something that could lead to other useful information or findings botanically, anthropologically, or archeologically. We are seeking your expertise to assess how this barren earth frankincense occurred in this area?

- The welfare of the communities who work with these trees - the trees and their workers are inseparable x2.
  - Quality standards and specifications for resin.
  - How to recognize a good quality of resin.
  - But in addition will be interested to know “Quality standards and specifications for resin, essential oils and products” and “Where to buy sustainably produced and frankincense with clear origin.”
  - What are climatic and soil conditions for frankincense trees to grow.
  - I’m interested in most of the points! Overharvesting is a real thing to manage etc.
  - I want to be sure that my sources are also in the best interest of the plants.
- 
- We cannot assume that these trees are merely a resource for our use alone, but that they have a purpose in the ecosystem of the area in which they grow. What other species rely on frankincense for their well-being? I’d like to hear more about that in the discussion.
  - The first half of that list all seems super important. I also feel like white western herbalists/enviro people neglect to even consider the humans affected by the ecocide and genocide we perpetuate and that no “eco” initiative can ever do any good while also being colonial and genocidal and racist at its core.
  - Are there historical and technological reasons behind the frankincense that we found recently in our home land. Our comment is to know why and how is it possible technically poored for centuries perhaps unknown early times
  - I have a goal of getting frankincense seeds and starting a small forest here in Hawaii. I am aware of its endangered presents and would like to start a seed bank to ensure that we support its survival.
  - The potential of other related tree species for production in Southern Africa.
  - Does frankincense and sandalwood grow in similar environmental conditions?
  - Has GFA developed any Voluntary Sustainability Standards?
  - We value the importance of traceability, sustainability and community work initiatives within the supply chain, to be correctly reflected through international standards from the CSR/ESG perspective.
  - Sustainability and fair trade.
  - How to deal with Nagoya/ABS in the context of Olibanum and Commiphora?
  - I have been working with plant extracts professionally for >25 yrs. and watch in horror as it became nothing more than a greed oriented sales channel. Many species of Boswellia have been over-harvested for more than a decade and it can’t be propagated. We should ban the trade at least short term until it can be proven sustainable which it currently is not.

- I think it's time to spread harvested seed, saplings, cuttings - and work towards guaranteeing we have access to these amazing plants in the future. Information on the different varieties, their particular uses, and differences should be better promulgated. Active conservation matters.
- Especially interested in *Boswellia serrata* and *Boswellia papyrifera*.
- I would like to know more about tree replenishment and international trade of resins in regard to European countries.

### *GENERAL COMMENTS AND THOSE ON THE WORKSHOP PROCESS OR SURVEY*

- I am interested in quite a few of the other issues as well but chose a broad range.
- I am interested in all topics but especially those that affect the future of the plant and the communities that use them.
- I would like to know as much as possible as I am struggling to find reliable information.
- I'd like to know more about all of these!
- I had the feeling I needed to tick more boxes here.....
- Most of the above.
- I would choose more options above, so I add quality standards and long term conservation.
- Many of the items in question 1 appeal to me.
- All of the issues above interest me.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- This is exciting!
- Excited for this conference.
- I want to do the right thing, even if that were to provide less products

## **Annex 2: Other comments on “What information is most urgently needed to ensure the long term future of Frankincense trees and the communities that harvest them?”**

### *TECHNICAL AND ACTIVITY RELATED COMMENTS*

- I would rather focus on the optimal amounts of resins that can be harvested rather than the maximum amounts. Harvesters should be fairly paid for their work (of course) but they must also become the primary carers of the trees they harvest to ensure not only the continued health of the trees but the well-being of the communities that rely on them.
- We need good data to begin.
- All of the above aspects and information points are important, but as to Q2, I think the focus needs to be on regenerative farming of them in a way that is sustainable and enables the stewards, harvesters and processors to thrive.
- Is there any way to support the communities currently growing and harvesting frankincense in order to make it more sustainable for them long term?



- We may need to add aspects of trade & power balance large vs small companies?); and user group impact possibilities for increasing sustainability in the chain (e.g. churches, aromatherapy users).
  - I would like to know where are the trees being propagated at present and what methods are being used?
  - If there are plagues, insects or other, affecting production?
  - More trees is the answer.
  - People around the world are overusing.
  - Knowledge of supply chain of frankincense trading and market is something essential to avoid exploiting practices by international partners and private companies.
  - Also.... I believe consumers need to be educated about the uses of something so pure.
  - In order to help our trees.... we need to train people to not overuse and therefore create such demand for product.
  - What can we do in that region to create more space and protection for the trees? What about some reserved park spaces for preservation and research?
  - By using frankincense in different ways than essential oil, it will most definitely sustain longer survival rate of frankincense species
  - Medical research and use does not offer further protection just more rape and pillage of the trees.
  - Various religions need to explore alternative herbs to displace frankincense use until the population rebounds by having conversations with themselves and others.
  - Cosmetic properties of the plants?
  - It is also important to know the scale of exportation out of our country to guess the threat faced by our indigenous species.
- A CITES listing would definitely help.
  - Sustainability and fair trade.

### *GENERAL COMMENTS AND THOSE ON THE WORKSHOP PROCESS OR SURVEY*

- A very interesting list of possible urgent issues.
- I am very interested in all of these questions.
- I would think all information will help.
- I don't understand how to choose only 3 things above.
- So much to learn.
- Thank you for doing this. It is so important. I look forward to writing on this for the publications I write for.

## Annex 3: Other comments on Q3. What most needs to be done to ensure the long term future of the Frankincense trees and the communities that harvest them? (Pick three)



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### TECHNICAL AND ACTIVITY RELATED COMMENTS

- The current species facing extinction are not only being overharvested but they are facing severe drought, species like *Boswellia papyrifera*
- According to our local communities and how carelessly it is harvested, it would be so helpful to create awareness raising campaigns.
- Creating a frankincense cooperative society and regulation acts passed by the government.
- As above, we need to concentrate on spreading the range of the trees themselves - that is the real priority.
- Biological activities of the plant.
- Research and exploration scientifically .
- We need a paradigm shift in thinking about how we use trees overall. And we need more of them.
- I think it's hard for consumers to tell when frankincense is genuinely being sustainably managed, and where companies are simply claiming that but it's not true.
- Yes, consumers need to be aware of how their choices affect the supply chain etc. but industry (the big cosmetic and perfumery companies) absolutely need to be on board and accountable.
- Creating awareness is definitely a good point, although I assume there could be a risk of fake certifications as well. Fairness and transparency besides mindful harvesting are the only solutions.
- These questions all favour regulations and control of a natural resource by companies. The surveys and “investigations”.
- I'm concerned that regulating it like with organizations such as CITES often drives trade underground and into the black market. I think awareness campaigns to inform consumers, whether perfumers / cosmetic makers / the Catholic Church / small buyers, would be a better focus initially.
- Capacity building will be needed at the national level to build CITES Management Authorities and CITES Scientific Authorities.
- Qualified institutions should be established to look after this sector
- I worked very closely on the Royal Hawaiian sandalwood projects for the last eight years. I see a lot of synergies in approach and would love to be a contributor.
- I do not know exactly what would help. I would like to know.
- Unfortunately I don't know what the right things are because I don't understand the business

### GENERAL COMMENTS AND THOSE ON THE WORKSHOP PROCESS OR SURVEY

- Also here, more options to be ticked? the list is nice!
- I think 3 options are too few.
- Thank you for all your leadership on this, up to now and going forward.

Photos: Dr Sue Canney Davison

Design: Paul Gurney  
[www.thegraphicdesignshop.co.uk](http://www.thegraphicdesignshop.co.uk)