

Fair Trade Sourcing: Organic Mint

Servicing the triple bottom line by benefiting farmers, consumers and manufacturers

Daemmon Reeve, Earthoil Plantations Ltd., with an introduction from Jeb Gleason-Allured, Editor

According to a new Natural Marketing Institute (NMI; www.nmisolutions.com) report, when it comes to the triple bottom line concept—people, planet and profit—consumers have turned against the “whatever the cost” strategy of previous years in favor of the first two pillars. “[C]onsumers clearly want more focus on the social and environmental legs of the stool, while profit takes a back seat,” the report notes. “Whereby this result might be expected, it points out the need for responsible capitalism.” NMI adds that, far from being anti-profit, the financial opportunities are significant, estimating that the market for lifestyles of health and sustainability (commonly referred to as LOHAS) is about \$209 billion and growing rapidly.

The renewed focus identified by the report encompasses social issues, employee workplace and environmental initiatives in the service of increased profits. NMI found that social issues somewhat trumped those of the environment, which strategically positions products made with fair trade and socially responsible ingredients. Such human-resource focused programs are extremely marketable, NMI found, making them an obvious opportunity for clients in the flavor and fragrance industry. Here, author Daemmon Reeve provides a case in point—fair trade organic mint oils.

—Jeb Gleason-Allured, Editor

Behind every product lies a story. But no matter how prettily it is packaged, the story will fall on deaf ears if it is not the one that people want to hear. Clearly, success depends on how well the product tells its story, and whether or not it resonates with the consumer. Organic and fair trade markets provide the perfect platform for storytelling; consumer trends in recent years prove that these are the types of stories the world wants to hear. With appeal and applications in a cross section of industries—from confectionery to cosmetics—organic mint oils are a case in point.

Today, the global health and wellness trend is ingrained in the consumer products industry, putting natural flavors and fragrances in great demand. Similarly, in recent years, the industry has witnessed a merging of natural, organic, eco and luxury concepts within the personal care sector. Consumers have come to expect more from their purchase, seeking out multiple benefits including those with psychological, functional and sensory attributes. Manufacturers are now being encouraged from all angles to alter their attitude and behavior towards the planet and its inhabitants; a clear shift in consciousness has occurred. As a result, the provenance of raw ingredients has become as instrumental as any of these factors, thus promising a bright future for organic and fair trade essential oils.

Ingredients in Personal Care

For centuries, mint has been used for medicinal and culinary purposes. Renowned for its antiseptic and cooling properties, the herb is currently among those being swept up in the avant-garde use of botanical blends in the wellness and personal care arena. Higher hygiene standards have generated sales of nature-inspired mouthwashes and toothpastes formulated from medicinal roots such as cinnamon and spearmint. Studies suggest that 71% of British consumers use mints or gum to freshen their breath, and 30% to cleanse the pallet.^o Likewise, the US market for mint flavored gum has shown a steady growth in recent years, and is considered a highly competitive and dynamic segment, especially due to the rising demand for sugarless options.



^oMintel; www.mintel.com



Food Ingredients

Overall, the confectionery market in the United Kingdom is set to reach sales of £1,908 million by 2014, equaling a 9% growth rate. In this setting, the healthy eating phenomenon has drawn attention to raw ingredients by highlighting antioxidant content in dark chocolate; meanwhile, consumers have begun associating “pure” with “good for you.” Earlier this year, confectionery giant Cadbury announced intentions to use only fair trade cocoa in its chocolate. Such a move represents the intersection of consumer beliefs and attitudes with requirements of the marketplace. Rising in popularity are novel and eclectic combinations of ingredients such as chili from the Americas or ginger from Asia. As with mint, these indigenous flavors have a strong cultural heritage; contributing to this heritage are farmers and their families.

Fair trade certification in the case of Earthoil’s organic mint oils has broadened horizons at each end of the supply chain. The Earthoil Foundation is the independent charitable trust set up to fund community projects in the Uttar Pradesh region of India—the source of its mint. Under this project, 600 small-scale farmers receive premium prices for their crop, along with training from agronomists and field managers on how to best utilize their land and nurture their crop. Just working conditions and policies form the very basics. More importantly, the farmers’ results are tangible.

For the consumer, the moral weight carried by the fair trade stamp cannot be underestimated; for manufacturers, the market and marketing opportunities are there to be taken. The diversity of naturals means that these arguments are equally valid outside of the food industry. A good example of this is the crossover of chocolate from food to top-end beauty treatments and facials. With health as prominent in personal care, cosmetics and household products, consumers are turning to natural and organic alternatives where available.

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