

Givaudan Protects Provence's "Blue Gold"

The ingredients supplier is collaborating with local groups to secure the quality of lavender.

Givaudan has secured a plan to preserve its wealth of fragrance ingredients by protecting the "blue gold" of Provence: lavender.

"When there's a possibility that the supply chain of a natural is fragile, then we try to tackle it to secure long-term sustainable sourcing," says Herve Fretay, Givaudan's marketing director of specialty ingredients.

In a move to protect the quality of its lavender supply chain, the fragrance ingredients supplier has become a member of Centre Régionalisé Interprofessionnel d'Expérimentation en Plantes à Parfum, Aromatiques et Médicinales (CRIEPPAM), a French fragrant plants research organization, and has built a three-way partnership in which Givaudan finances the supply of certified healthy lavender plants from CRIEPPAM to the members of France Lavande, a local growers cooperative.

"These programs take quite a long time to implement," explains Fretay. "Five years ago, there was a crisis on lavender pricing, [so] we thought it would be very important for us to secure our lavender. We had this first agreement to secure our supply and then, this disease emerged."

That disease is well-known to French lavender growers; they commonly call it the "le dépérissement de la lavande," or the decline of lavender. Specifically called Stolbur phytoplasma, the condition weakens the plant until it dies. Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) and lavandin (*L. latifolia* x *L. angustifolia*) cultures are affected by the "decline," according to Jonathan Gaudin and his colleagues, who have studied the impact of the disease on lavender, which is included in the *Bulletin of Insectology, Hyalesthes obsoletus*, known as cixiidae, spread the disease from lavender plants to other lavender plants. Recent European climate changes have caused proliferation of the insect which spreads the disease and further weakens plants through periods of drought. The main concern is that Stolbur phytoplasma can increase lavender plant's chance of dying by up to 50%, according to Fretay. And although there are other sources of lavender outside of France, since the main source of lavandin is primarily the south of France, this could have a devastating impact on the top-quality variety.

"If we don't do anything and the disease spreads, we could be facing an immense shortage of this crop," says Fretay. "It would be less economically profitable for growers to plant lavandin," he explains.

And if growers lose 50–70% of the crop due to this disease, either the products would become exceptionally expensive and/or the growers wouldn't find it economically beneficial to cultivate, according to Fretay.



"They would switch to something else," he says. "It's the worst case scenario, but we need to do something about that."

Which is why under the partnership with Givaudan, CRIEPPAM is working on both short- and long-term solutions to the disease. Part of the plan includes utilizing nurseries that only carry lavender plants that aren't infected and these plants are then sold to France Lavande affiliated growers, Fretay says. Givaudan has financially supported the development of these four plant nurseries that will supply 40% of the plant needs for the 2013 crop in France.

In the meantime, CRIEPPAM has been starting to test specific treatments to help curtail "le dépérissement." Fretay says one of the methods involves spraying a clay substance on the plant during a certain time of year during which both the cixiidae are present and when it's a vital time for lavender survival.

"It's a very specific treatment at a very specific time," says Fretay, who adds that the method doesn't have an impact on the plant's attributes or the quality of the essential oil.

Still, the group doesn't use a one-size-fits-all approach.

"You don't have a 100% solution. It's by combining different solutions that you can have an even bigger impact," he says.

France Lavande is now attracting more farmers and participants, 150 roughly, as compared to around 50–70 before the agreement, according to Fretay. The group cultivates the lavender and distills it locally in the fields.

"With the nurseries and the treatments, we are making good steps. But for us if we could eradicate this disease, that would be fantastic," Fretay adds.

In the meantime, the main goal, he says, is maintaining supply and the right quality of lavender and lavandin for Givaudan's customers.

"We feel we have secured this supply chain for Givaudan," concludes Fretay. "We are reinforcing the interest of these naturals for these perfumers and giving it new life."

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