



The AlpBioEco project uses innovative methods to foster sustainable development in the European Alpine region and raises awareness regarding the economic potential in bioeconomy.

REASONS WHY WE CHOOSE TO FOCUS ON THE HERBS VALUE CHAIN IN THE ALPBIOECO PROJECT

The EU market is the largest market for spices and herbs in the world, with an increase of 6.6% annually (2013 – 2017) of import from developing countries¹. The market has a good trade potential, especially for small-scale farmers in regions where a significant local demand exists for spice and herb extracts.

The key drivers leading to the growth of the herb extract markets are the increased availability of international cuisines in the major economies and the need for **high-quality and sustainably sourced** herbs, following certain production and sustainability standards. In general, the market for herbs represents a niche in the agricultural sector, with small companies that have a strong tradition but are lacking in innovation and with many as yet unexpressed potentials.

ANALYSIS AND “DISCOVERED” POTENTIALS OF THE HERBS VALUE CHAIN

- **New trends and good opportunities for developing new business models** refer to the possibilities to supply special varieties, to focus on product characteristics (e.g. better colour and taste), to customise according to buyers' preferences and to produce sustainable (i.e. organic, fair trade) products;
- **New products and processes** that could offer new business opportunities are related to the possibilities of using the by-products obtained during the harvesting or production process (for example the exhausted herbs of the oil distillation process) in the cosmetic and nutraceutical sectors, the use of herbal derivatives as ingredients for natural herbicides and fungicides, or the exploitation of new herbs for direct human consumption;
- Herbs market could be supported by a series of activities like the establishment of **joint quality guidelines by producers and processors** that ensure a high-quality standard of Alpine herbs, more cooperation with regional organisations, umbrella brands and other relevant market players to enhance supra-regional marketing, the support of communication between market players to identify region-specific potentials for innovation and the possibilities for their joint implementation, and the involvement of machine manufacturers (harvesters, seeders, processing machines) to gain information about new technological standards and their implementation possibilities.

IDEAS FOR ECO-INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS AND BUSINESS MODEL DEVELOPMENT

The AlpBioEco team designed new eco-innovative business models (BMs) in cross-industry open innovation workshops involving small and medium enterprises, cluster organisations, academia and societal actors to accelerate collective learning and foster value creation.

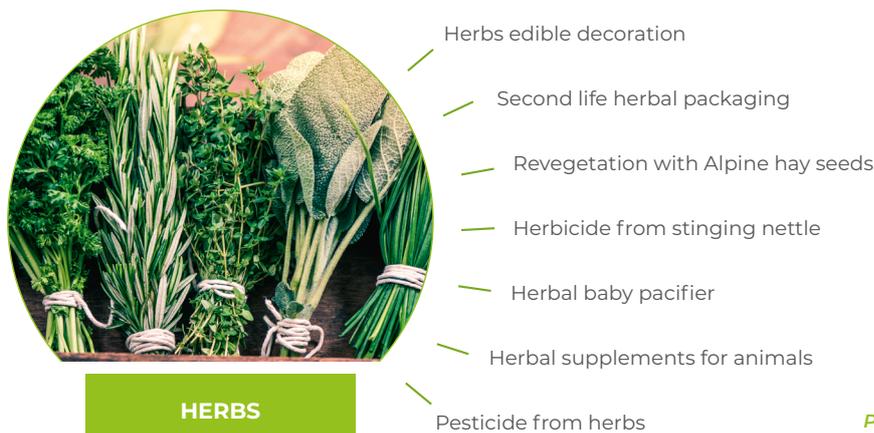


Photo: Nahaufnahme eines frischen Kräuterbunches, © marcin jucha

¹Source: CBI, Market Information, Spices and Herbs: <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/spices-herbs>

BUSINESS MODELS SELECTION AND TEST PHASE

Two business models from the herbs value chain have been selected by AlpBioEco project partners for further development and testing: “Herbal pacifier” and “Revegetation with Alpine hay seeds”. They were chosen according to several criteria such as the degree of novelty, sustainability and feasibility as well as market attractiveness. These two selected BMs were checked and validated in detail with experts in several regional focus group workshops as well as through business visits to local companies and organisations.

“**Herbal pacifier**” denotes a pacifier for babies made of organic rubber. The dummy contains a vessel with Alpine herbal fluids (i.e. hydrolates) and can be used to treat the most common disorders of early childhood (toothache, colic, insomnia, skin diseases, etc.). The herbal pacifier is a totally innovative product: if traditionally a dummy has been a comfort device for babies, in this case it is used to treat pain in a completely natural way using herbs as raw material. This product is regionally replicable and enables the promoting of small-scale economies.

“**Revegetation with Alpine hay seeds**” relates to a new revegetation system that uses the seed directly from meadows (rough pastures). With a special machine, the seeds of the flower heads can be harvested every three years. The rest of the meadow remains unchanged and can be mowed and nurtured by the farmer without any changes. The harvested seeds are dried, packed and stored and can then be used for roadside planting, green roofs or renaturing sites after construction. The advantage of this seed is that it is well adapted to the climatic conditions and location compared to imported ones from abroad.

DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY AND TRANSFER GUIDELINES

In the final part of the AlpBioEco project, in work package “**T4 – Policy Transfer Preparation**”, the project results are transferred into guidelines on how to implement the business models and improve the framework conditions for bioeconomy and innovation. To achieve this, regional advisory boards consisting of regional representatives from business, science, civil society and politics were set up for each project region, focusing on one business model. Together with these regional advisory boards, regional policy implementation guidelines were developed. These guidelines present the strengths and weaknesses of the project regions regarding the chosen business model. Furthermore, they include economic and policy recommendations to promote the implementation of the business model in the respective region. To do so, several workshops were conducted, applying creative and analytical methods and using collaborative online tools.

To promote the implementation of the developed eco-innovative business models in other regions or countries beyond Austria, Italy, France, Germany, and Slovenia, the AlpBioEco team held a transnational transfer meeting with representatives from all regional advisory boards and developed a transregional and transnational transfer guideline. This guideline presents recommendations on how the project partners can cooperate on a supra-regional level, but also how the business models can be transferred to other Alpine regions or countries.

Project partners working on the herbs value chain:



EUROPEAN UNION



www.sigmaringen.de



www.itkam.org



eng.gzs.si



www.walgau-wunder.at

→ For more information on our project activities and results, please visit our project website at:
<https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/alpbioeco/en/home>

→ For more detailed information on the eco-innovative business models for the herbal pacifier and for Alpine hay seeds, please read our Best Practice Brochure: <https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/alpbioeco/en/activities-results/main-activities-results/validation-bms>

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