Beat: Business

Devil s claw - an organic remedy to economic hardship

Named for its spiky, fist-like seed pods

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USPA NEWS - Devil´s claw (a plant named for its spiky, fist-like seed pods) has been used by the Khwe people of southern central Africa for as long as anyone can remember. Prized in the region and internationally as a remedy for aches and pains, the fleshy tuber´s popularity as an alternative treatment...

Devil´s claw (a plant named for its spiky, fist-like seed pods) has been used by the Khwe people of southern central Africa for as long as anyone can remember. Prized in the region and internationally as a remedy for aches and pains, the fleshy tuber´s popularity as an alternative treatment has led to severe overharvesting. So the relative abundance in Namibia´s Bwabwata National Park is precious“”as is the organic, sustainable harvesting business the Khwe people are now building around devil´s claw.

The organic, sustainable process calls for using naturally growing plants, and only annually removing tubers from one side of the root to stimulate growth on the other, still-buried side. This allows the plants to live out their natural lifespans and regenerate.

The certification scheme calls for 'wild harvesting' rather than tilling the land, and for taking only about 1/3 of the roots identified. WWF, through their partnership with Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, or IRDNC, is helping to protect and expand the project.

Once the plants are harvested, weighed and bundled, they are sold to intermediaries who market to American and European companies who then sell to consumers as a form of arthritis relief. And because the Kyamaracan Association has the only legally defined right to sell certified organic devil´s claw from Bwabwata, the money from those sales goes straight back to the community (and in particular the women) who harvest the plants.

Meticulous records are kept. According to Kyamaracan Association records, 1,128 women and 612 men took part in the devil´s claw harvests of 2014. Women are the main farmers of the organic remedy, and the main beneficiaries.

Source : World Wildlife Fund

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