



**BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects **Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus**

Half Year Report

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 2-3 pages** in length.

If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.

Submission Deadline: 31st October 2025

Please note all projects that were active before 1st October 2025 are required to complete a Half Year Report.

Submit to: BCF-Reports@niras.com including your project ref in the subject line.

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| Project reference | DARNV021 |
| Project title | Certifying Sustainable Frankincense through a Global Value Chains Approach |
| Country(ies)/territory(ies) | Somalia, Kenya |
| Lead Organisation | FairWild Foundation |
| Partner(s) | ProFound – Advisers in Development; African Wildlife Economy Institute at Stellenbosch University (AWEI); TRAFFIC; FairSource Botanicals; Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network (WFEN); Nagaad Gums and Resins |
| Project Leader | Deborah Vorhies |
| Report date and number (e.g. HYR1) | HYR2_31, October 2025 |
| Project website/blog/social media | https://www.fairwild.org/fairwild-projects/frankincense |

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end of September).

In the past six months, the project team have continued with implementation as planned.

Output 1:

No activities planned in Yr2

Output 2:

2.4 Discussion on wildlife economy opportunities:

To build from the assessment of potential wildlife economies, a roundtable is planned to be held in early 2026, to build from a confirmed industry meeting to be held in December 2025 (Output 4), increasing awareness of the findings and identify opportunities and interest in progressing any options, including the adoption of certified approaches.

Output 3:

3.2 Deliver training to collection operations, harvesters and other stakeholders

To build awareness and interest in progressing with sustainable harvesting and certification, an introduction to the FairWild Standard, and the requirements to become certified, is proposed to be held with up to five Kenyan operators. This aims to generate interest in sustainable harvesting and requests to engage in the certification process. **This activity will be detailed in a change request, to be submitted in Q3.**

3.3 Support collection operations to implement FairWild and prepare for audits:

Three operators, certified in Y1 of the project, are on track to complete their required annual audits in November 2025, demonstrating their continued compliance with the FairWild Standard. An additional new operator, [REDACTED] has been supported through the preparation, audit and certification process. To date, the project has resulted in four operators receiving certification, 200% of the project target.

Four more operators are in the process towards certification (100% of the project target). Of these, [REDACTED] is currently finalising a Management Plan and aims to complete an audit by the end of December 2025 (Annex 1).

A unique women-led and women-centred cooperative operator [REDACTED] aims to provide ethically sourced frankincense to the international market. The operator is new to the market and business operations, and is seeking support to establish social, ethical and environmentally responsible business practices. It is expected that certification will not be possible within the project period due to the level of capacity and funding at the current time.

In September 2025, a proposal to support the certification process for [REDACTED] in Kenya, was sent to the [REDACTED] project. This would leverage the project's outreach in Kenya and extend the FairWild Standard to additional Kenyan companies, helping to strengthen the social and industry awareness and acceptance of the Standard.

Output 4:

4.2 Secure purchase arrangements for FairWild certified ingredients from international buyers:

Partnership with [REDACTED] to reach international markets, continued with participation at the In-cosmetics and IFEAT trade shows (Activity 5.3). Discussions between [REDACTED] and purchasers at the event are ongoing, with [REDACTED] noting *"the connections made [during In-cosmetics] were valuable, and we remain optimistic that these interactions will lead to potential business opportunities in the near future"*. Through the Darwin SHIFT project, FairWild also facilitated the participation of [REDACTED] at the In-cosmetics trade show.

To build from the discussions held on wildlife economies (Activity 2.4) in Y1, a roundtable will be held with stakeholders in December 2025, where sustainable frankincense harvesting and management, and other opportunities in the East African region will be discussed. The aim of the roundtable is to strengthen connections between ethical and sustainable suppliers and interested brands, to promote the socioeconomic value of wild East African resources, and to invigorate discourse around the threats faced by East African ecosystems and communities.

Output 5:

5.2 Publish article on Frankincense in general media with broad consumer reach...:

To fill an information gap, and to help inform industry sourcing managers, an article exploring the distinct uses of different frankincense species, and the geographies they are present in, has been developed. The article will be published in Q3 distributed through the FairWild website, newsletter, social media and to companies directly at the SCS Formulate trade show to be held in the UK in November 2025.

To leverage business interest in extending the FairWild Standard across industry, a B2B focused campaign is proposed, providing an opportunity for engaged companies to communicate the

business case for the social and environmental benefits and sustainability impact from purchasing certified ingredients. **This proposal will be subject to a change request, to be submitted in Q3, and reflected in proposed changes to the MEL Framework.**

5.3 Engage with brand and retail companies to ensure information about FairWild certification

From 8 to 10, April 2025, FairWild-certified frankincense businesses were promoted at the annual [In-cosmetics Global trade show](#) held in Amsterdam. The show attracted over 1,000 representatives from the cosmetics and fragrance industry, including buyers and sellers. FairWild hosted a stand presenting aromatic source products, including frankincense. Supported through FairWild's Operator Support Fund two FairWild certified operators [REDACTED] participated in the event, communicating the benefits of the FairWild Standard to participants, and at the stand (Annex 2). Frankincense products were displayed and samples distributed to those interested, with business contacts being made. Future discussions with the two companies will seek to identify interest from buyers for verified products and companies in certification, raised through the stand and participation of at the event. Participation in trade shows helps to position the FairWild Standard as a recognised industry certification for social and environmental sustainability, supported and communicated by members of the industry. In addition, opportunity for direct face to face discussion, enables deeper and trusted relationships to be developed.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

The anticipated impact across two geographical locations has not been equal. Currently, implementation has been driven by opportunities for business engagement in Somalia/Somaliland, resulting in greater demand and impact than anticipated. Despite this, four operators have achieved certification, double the total project target of two.

Developing networks in the Kenyan frankincense trade chain has proved more challenging than anticipated. This has been due to a combination of the limited number of pre-existing connections, the less developed state of the Kenyan frankincense industry identifying the limited markets for *Boswellia sp.* that are predominate in Kenya. Though outreach will continue in Kenya, (see Section 1), it is likely that the project will conclude with project targets being met primarily through the impact in Somalia.

Through project engagement in Somalia, opportunities to leverage business interest and investment have been identified in Ethiopia and Oman. Due to high market demand, extending the FairWild Standard and certification in both countries, would result in a significant impact on Frankincense supply chains.

Discussed with NIRAS:

No

Formal Change Request submitted:

No

Received confirmation of change acceptance:

No

Change Request reference if known: *If you submitted a financial Change Request, you could find the reference in the email from NIRAS confirming the outcome*

Guidance for Section 4: The information you provide in this section will be used by Defra to review the financial status of projects. This review will identify projects at random for spot checks on financial management and will include requests for evidence of the actual spend information provided below. Please ensure the figures you provide are as accurate as possible and that you have the evidence to support it. You do not need to provide it now.

4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025)

Actual spend: £ [REDACTED]

4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2026)?

Yes ☐ No ☒ Estimated underspend: £

4c. If you expect an underspend, then you should consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a re-budget Change Request as soon as possible, and not later than 31st December. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes to your project if necessary.
Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.

5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCFs management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Suspicion or allegations related to fraud and error concerns should be reported to fraudanderror@Defra.gov.uk

6. Project risk management

6a. If your project has an Overseas Security and Justice assessment, please provide an update on any related risks, and any special conditions in your award paperwork if relevant for your project.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

6b. Have any concerns or allegations relating to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment been reported in the past 6 months?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Suspicion or allegations related to safeguarding concerns should be reported to ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk

7. Please use this section to respond to any feedback provided when your project was confirmed, or from your most recent Annual Report. As a reminder, all projects that were scored as 'Not Yet Sensitive' in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

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| <p>assessment of their latest Annual Report should demonstrate how they are meeting the minimum GESI-Sensitive standard.</p> <p>Feedback relating to the provision of evidence for activities and output measurements have been noted and will be strengthened in the final report.</p> <p>The MEL framework has been reviewed to determine appropriateness of the indicators, end of project targets, and means of verification. Proposed amendments to the MEL Framework are provided in Annex 4. Despite the focus of activities in Somalia, it is expected that end-of-project targets will be met. Details for surveys completed in Y1 (participants and answers) will be requested.</p> <div style="background-color: black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div> |
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Checklist for submission

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| Have you responded to feedback from your latest Annual Report Review? You should respond in section 6, and annexe other requested materials as appropriate. | Y |
| Have you reported against the most up to date information for your project? | Y |
| Have you clearly highlighted any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website? | Y |
| Include your project reference in the subject line of submission email. | Y |
| Submit to BCF-Reports@niras.com | |
| Please ensure claim forms and other communications for your project are not included with this report. | |