

LitSara® essential oil and its range of personal care products

# The LitSara® story

from Traditional Knowledge to Innovation

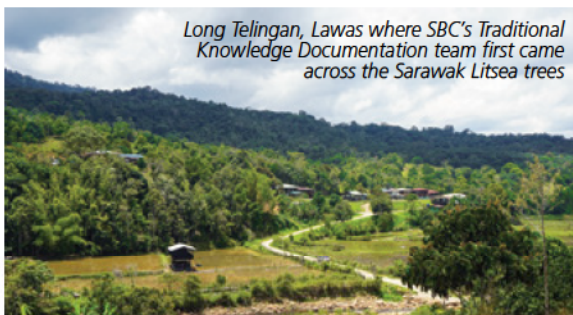


In year 2005, a group of researchers from the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre (SBC) who were on a field collection trip with the Lun Bawang of Long Telingan, some 3½ hours by road from Lawas town, came across a tree that made a crisp and citrus like scent.

The team was there to facilitate the documentation of the community's knowledge on utilisation of useful plants under the Centre's Traditional Knowledge Documentation Programme.

The community members explained that the berry like fruits were used in their cooking to add flavour and fragrance to their food, while both the leaves and fruits were used to relieve backaches and stomachaches.

Hence, the tree and its uses were documented and subsequently found



Long Telingan, Lawas where SBC's Traditional Knowledge Documentation team first came across the Sarawak Litsea trees

to be also utilised in the same manner among the Kelabit community in the Bario highlands and the Bidayuh community of Kampung Kiding in the Padawan range, near Kuching.

Taxonomically, the tree is identified as *Litsea cubeba*. To the Lun Bawang and Kelabit it is known as *Tenem* and to the Bidayuh, as *Pahkak*.

With the communities' consent, SBC collected the plant materials and set about to extract the revitalising scented essential oil from its leaves and fruits, at its laboratories.

Laboratory tests have found that the composition of essential oil derived from the trees in Sarawak, differs from the same species which is found in China and other parts of this region.

These differences in the natural occurring chemicals in the oils are most probably brought about by geographical differences.

The essential oil components from the fruits and leaves of the trees in Sarawak show anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory properties, and is able to repel insects. The oil also carries a scent that invigorates, rejuvenates and inspires.

The potential of having Sarawak's very own multipurpose oil led to

Intellectual Property certifications – Geographical Indication (GI) for the tree (Sarawak Litsea) and Trademark for the essential oil (LitSara®).

Development of ideas to utilise the oil were carried out by SBC and products

for pre-commercialisation promotions were developed at its laboratories.

Five communities are currently actively involved in the sustainable conservation and development of LitSara®, by way of sustainable harvesting of raw material, distillation of the essential oil for pre-commercialisation and propagation of the plant itself.

These communities are, the Bidayuh of Kampung Kiding, Padawan; Lun Bawang of Long Kerebangan and Long Telingan, Lawas; and the Kelabit of Pa'Lungan and Pa'Ukat, Bario.

With these current developments and more to come, equitable sharing of benefits must be channelled back to these communities.

Provisions for Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) as prescribed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have been incorporated into the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre Ordinance.

This means that benefits arising from the use of the indigenous communities' knowledge and biological resources must be channelled back to them to improve their livelihood and develop the use of plants from their respective traditional knowledge.

Recently in July 2016, The Right Honourable Chief Minister of Sarawak, Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri (Dr) Haji Adenan bin Haji Satem, who is also the Minister of Resource Planning and Environment, launched the LitSara® brand at SBC.

Guests of SBC who have tried these pre-commercial products provide feedback as part of the Centre's continuous efforts to improve the formulation.

They find the scent of the products invigorating and refreshing, and that these products provide an alternative range of items which incorporate natural ingredients while carrying a message of a sustainable cause.



For more information on LitSara®, contact the SARAWAK BIODIVERSITY CENTRE at  
 ☎ +6082 610 610 . ✉ biosar@sbc.org.my . 🌐 www.sbc.org.my . 📱 sarawak.biodiversitycentre