



agriculture & environmental affairs

Department:
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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

ESSENTIAL OIL PRODUCTION IN KWAZULU-NATAL (TEA TREE)

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Tea Tree essential oil is one of the many essential oils produced in KZN. Tea Tree oil is used as natural medicine due to its anti-microbial properties in mouth wash preparations against throat infections, Oral Thrush and Gingivitis; in cosmetic preparations in the form of creams, soaps and lotions to diminish skin spots and blemishes and in the treatment of fungal and bacterial infections such as Athlete's Foot and in shampoos to combat lice.

The effectiveness and market acceptance of Tea Tree oil depends on its chemical composition. In addition, the amount of oil obtained per ha will determine its economic viability. The annual potential oil yield per ha is 400 kg. However, a variety of factors influence both the quality and quantity of Tea Tree oil. Tea Tree was collected monthly from two Tea Tree research trials at Cedara and Ixopo, respectively. The Tea Tree was steam distilled in the laboratory, the oil extracted quantified and its chemical composition determined. Results from the Cedara trial showed that the quality and quantity of Tea Tree oil varies within and from season to season and that temperature and rainfall also have an effect on these parameters. The study at Ixopo showed that South-facing trees produced more oil than the North-facing ones and that higher quantity of oil was extracted from the young growth.

Tea Tree oil producers can sell their oil in big quantities from two litres to two tons. This is sold to both local and international buyers. Small amounts can also be supplied to pharmacies and general public in twenty ml bottles. Tea Tree oil producers can also use the oil to manufacture their own products.

Quality, quantity, continuity and good market strategy are important ingredients for a sustainable essential oil industry.