



African Agency for Arid Resources Ltd



AFRICAN AGENCY FOR ARID RESOURCES LTD

COMPANY PROFILE



Introduction

Over 70% of the lands in Kenya, and 60% in the entire African continent, fall under the Arid and Semi-Arid classification, facing the significant challenge of receiving low and unreliable rainfall, a situation worsened by the impacts of climate change leading to severe disruption of traditional livelihoods in these areas, where conventional sources of income like pastoralism and crop rearing have become increasingly unsustainable. Adding to the adversity, these regions experience marginalization, often receiving minimal or no development aid from governmental bodies.

The communities residing in these arid and semi-arid lands encounter numerous challenges, including food insecurity, land degradation resulting from overgrazing, conflicts arising from the scarcity of resources, gender disparities, social exclusion, and a decline in biodiversity. Paradoxically, these regions possess a wealth of resources – at least in Kenya - including Non-Timber Forest Products such as gum Arabic, myrrh, frankincense, aloe and sisal, which hold high demand in sectors like cosmetics, food, pharmaceutical and wellness. Still, despite their potential, these resources remain largely untapped due to a lack of knowledge and inadequate market linkages on top of high level of informality across sectors and little to know infrastructures. Addressing these barriers is crucial to unlocking the economic potential of these regions and fostering sustainable development, together with the creation of formal markets, regulatory framework, regulatory processes and quality standards. Half of the population of the entire African continent lives within arid lands and yet there is little development and spotlight for what is literally the frontline of climate adaptation. African Agency for Arid Resources Limited (Agar Ltd) was born with the precise intention to invest in such lands and create value out of such a scenario, in partnership with communities and stakeholders, and with the aim to serve the global market.





ABOUT US

Agar is an award-winning Kenyan company dealing in natural resources from Arid and Semi-Arid Lands in East Africa: Started as a commodities agency specializing in the trade of gum Arabic and resins such as frankincense and myrrh, and shortly after, creating value addition by distilling resins into essential oils, our product line now consists of over 15+ essential oils, carrier and massage oils, body butters, a line of organic aloe-based cosmetics, and additional cosmetic products under the new Jua by Agar™ brand, now available in 4 countries. Jua is also a successful shop in Village Market, a renowned mall in Nairobi, Kenya, is sold in 20+ shops and bought as room amenities in 50+ hospitality structures in an array of volumes tending to the market's many demands; Agar also offer consultancy services specifically on arid land's activities and projects.

Our team is comprised by 10+ employees of which 90% are young well-educated women below 35, 6 field agents and 500 registered collectors and farmers all overseen by a Board of Directors. We work in an area roughly the size of Switzerland and have 1 field storage in Marsabit, a main HQ and production point in Nanyuki, shop + office in Nairobi and shall soon open an office in the Kenyan coast. Our nurseries are also in Nanyuki.



MISSION

To be the lead business in the economically empowered, indigenous and innovative public-private partnership in the dry lands of Africa, specializing in the sustainable exploitation of natural resources through biodiversity, conservation practices, environmental sustainability and forestation.



VISION

Our vision is to support the empowerment of pastoralist communities in the African ASAL through sustainable exploitation of natural forest resources, by providing them with market access and stakeholders with professional technical advice in selected NFTP value chains.



BULK INGREDIENTS

The offer of bulk ingredients – as seen above – has been the first trade of the company since inception in 2018. We have created networks of collectors, farmers and harvesters and often trained and equipped them to ensure sustainability and standards of quality. We have carried out assessments in order to map resources and understand logistics meaning we know the territory extremely well, utilizing field agents in collection and farming areas coordinated by a Field and Quality Manager who travels frequently to the sourcing areas. This control over the value chain allows us to know with great precision where the resources are coming from which is how we ensure traceability and compliance, which is part of our certification efforts (see below) together with the testing of most of our resources against quality parameters.

Agar can now export large quantities of gum Arabic, Frankincense and Sweet Myrrh essential oils, shea butter, baobab oil and powder, aloe powder and bitter gum/latex using Nairobi airport or Mombasa port.

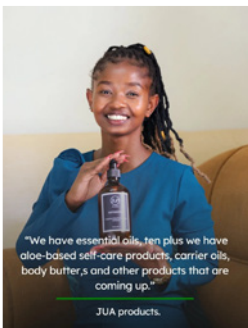




JUA BY AGAR™

Jua by Agar™ started as a line of essential oils made exclusively of raw materials picked and processed on the African continent; The oils in the line are certified organic by international certifying bodies (or in the process to be) and are predominantly made in Kenya or in the region. As part of our empowerment program, we train collectors in the Northern Kenya on sustainable ways of tapping Frankincense and Myrrh resins which are then distilled into pure essential oils for the local and export market. The aloe line – originally designed for the hospitality industry - is made in collaboration with women's group who we train on correct farming methods of indigenous aloe, provide the aloe seedlings and later buy the mature aloe plants to use during formulation of the entire line: We aim to continue growing our aloe plantation in the arid and semi-arid land to restore more degraded lands while supporting the communities we work with socially and economically.

Baobab, moringa and our blends of oils are all homegrown or collected and sourced within, again expressing total control over the value chain which allows us to make and sourced by products such as aloe, baobab and moringa powders. The line is now in 50+ hospitality structures and 20+ retailers, including our own Jua by Agar shop which was launched in December 2023 in Nairobi. Furthermore, we are also one of the few companies in the region offering contract manufacturing and private label options, building up our client's brands from the ground up offering our products under different labels, for a clientele which has reached now 10+ accounts for the white label option alone.





CONSULTANCIES

AGAR Ltd is also a leading consultancy agency in the region using its expertise for need assessments, mappings, feasibility and other value chains studies specifically on Non-Timber Forest Products and their value chains in arid lands, working closely with pastoralist communities and other stakeholders. We also train on collection, sorting and grading techniques, build and sell harvesting and grading equipment and have participated in numerous panels on land restoration and regeneration as private sector's experts.

Arid lands do not get as much spotlight as other areas, investments are scarce, infrastructures poor and there's little to none sector's regulation which is all aspects we have been working on with development partners such as the UN (FAO), NGOs such as World Vision, Climate KIC, CESVI but also companies (IRAM, ARS progetti and SWS consulting), central governments and local governments for the last 6 years in the entire East African region.



Value chains analysis on dry lands resources



Set up of drylands' nurseries and resilience based plantations



Feasibility and baseline studies + rapid assessments



Technical trainings on selected ASAL livelihoods



Sale of arid lands' trees and plants seedlings



PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

In the years we have carried out feasibility and baseline studies, rapid field assessments, value chains analysis, resources' mapping but also trained on technical harvesting for selected value chains and on set-up and management of aloe farms amongst other activities. In Kenya we have worked in Samburu, Laikipia, West Pokot, Isiolo, Marsabit, Turkana, Wajir and Kitui counties; in Uganda we have worked in the Karamoja cluster, Teso and Elgon regions.

Since 2018 – as a company or as consultants - we have been part of programs such as the E4IMPACT accelerator, the KCIC Greenbiz Incubator and the Land Accelerator by WRI, and the program Build Back Better by Yunus Social Hub and the Climate KIC Climathon. As contracted consultants, we have been part of projects and programs such as IMARA by World Vision, Wei-Wei River Catchment Restoration Project by ARS progetti, GEF-6 by FAO and other smaller initiatives always contracted as arid lands' experts and worked closely with central and local government understanding the value of public private partnerships





KAVADI®

The Kenya Arid Lands Value Chains Initiative (KAVADI®) is a capacity-building copyrighted approach dedicated to helping communities in arid and semi-arid areas of Eastern Africa utilize Non-Timber Forest Products (NTPFs) through a multifaceted approach which involves training local communities in harvesting techniques for gum Arabic and other resins which include myrrh and frankincense, as well as promoting the cultivation of aloe and the establishment of tree plantations with commercial potential. These efforts are designed to foster sustainable resource management, enhance climate change adaptation, and mitigate the impacts of desertification and deforestation, all while promoting the inclusion of women and youth in production processes. KAVADI® also provides comprehensive training in basic and business management skills, accountability and record-keeping, in order to boost the economic resilience of these communities and allow them to think as enterprises and not beneficiaries. Additionally, this program aims to define sectoral capability, enhance procedural and regulatory management, and set guidelines with the aim of generating money for the local economies by improving new and ecologically friendly agro-forestry value chains. The concept also emphasizes the connection with public and private players while forming strategic alliances for the marketing and commercialization of products to get access to new markets and the fundamental importance of compliance and practical understandings, which is what we want to focus on with the set-up of an incubator aimed exclusively at enterprises and entrepreneurs active in arid lands with sustainable ideas to develop exclusively in these areas.

Part of this approach was financed by the Kenya Catalytic Jobs Fund (KCJF – Funded by UK FDO), in 2021 and 2022 and set the base of our current aloe operations confirming its potential.



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Location

Nairobi;

Village market, Ground floor,
old wing, opposite chapacopy

Nanyuki;

Muthaiga estate, Haile Selassie Rd.

