



[Exporting aloe to Europe](#)

Demand for aloes is growing, particularly in Europe. Most demand is met by *Aloe vera*, which is cultivated on a plantation scale. The market for this aloe is dominated by large players. This factsheet is about aloes as ingredient for the health products industry. Here there are also opportunities for other *Aloe* species, especially *Aloe ferox*. If you want to enter this market, you will need to have a supply chain which offers access to sufficient raw material from sustainable wild collection.

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1 . Product description

Product definition

There are more than 500 species within the *Aloe* genus. The genus is native to tropical and southern Africa (incl. Madagascar and Indian Ocean islands) and the Arabian Peninsula.

The leaves of these plants provide gels and saps that are used in cosmetic, food and health products. The largest market for aloe gels and saps is the cosmetics industry.

The main commercial species is *Aloe vera*, which is cultivated. It is estimated that around [90% of the aloe market](#) is based on *Aloe vera*, which also has the best [organised](#) industry. *Aloe vera* is particularly dominant in the cosmetics industry.

Aloe vera is now cultivated in the Mediterranean, India, Australia, South America the Caribbean and North America. The biggest *Aloe vera* producer, [Forever Living](#), is based in the United States. The main producing countries are Mexico and the Dominican Republic, which have taken over the leading role of Venezuela where production decreased strongly.

Besides *Aloe vera*, other *Aloe* species are used in health products, in particular *A. ferox* and in some cases *A. perryi* and *A. arborescens*.

There is no Harmonised System code for trade in aloes, but products are included under 1302.19: 'other vegetable saps and extracts'.

Common marketed aloe products

In Europe, aloes are marketed in [various forms](#). Usually they are marketed as gel and whole leaf extracts:

- Aloe gel extract is produced from the gel in the inner leaf pulp of aloe plants.
- Aloe whole leaf extract (also referred to as whole leaf aloe juice, or non-decolourised whole leaf extract), is the extract of the whole leaf and contains both the gel and the latex (see below).
- Decolourised whole leaf extract is made by removing the latex from the aloe whole leaf extract to remove the bitterness and colour caused by the latex. This process changes its properties significantly. In the case of *Aloe ferox* this is done by first tapping the latex.
- Dried aloe latex (commonly called juice, but also sap or bitter sap in some references) is mainly used in medicinal products, and is described in various pharmacopoeia monographs. This juice contains high levels of aloin (the main active compound of aloes).

Only low amounts of gel and whole leaf and gel extract of *Aloe ferox* are used in the European health market. Production is low when compared to total volumes of leaves harvested for latex. Most leaves remain in the field after tapping the latex. However, industry sources indicate that gel extract and whole leaf extract of *Aloe ferox* could meet similar market needs as those met by *Aloe vera* (the most common source of gel extract and whole leaf extract) and *Aloe arborescens*.

In contrast, according to industry sources, latex used for medicinal purposes is most commonly based on *Aloe ferox*. They report that its aloin content is higher than that of *Aloe vera*. Moreover, the latex is easier to tap from the leaves and process, which often involves tappers boiling the juice in the field. Extraction of whole leaf or gel extract for the health sector requires a much higher level of quality control (e.g. HACCP).

Health applications of aloes

Table 1 below gives an overview and classification for aloes most commonly used in food supplements and herbal medicinal products. For use in herbal medicinal products, aloes also need to match the [composition as specified in the European Pharmacopoeia](#).

Several European countries (or groups of countries, such as Belgium, France and Italy in the case of BELFRIT) have established positive lists of species which are allowed to be used in food supplements. You can find these in the table below. Please note that species allowed for use in food are not necessarily allowed for supplements (e.g. in concentrated form).

The use of species in medicine is described in pharmacopoeia monographs. A pharmacopoeia is a reference work identifying and specifying medicines. The descriptions identifying medicines are called monographs. You can find these references in the table below.

Table 1: Use of aloe species in health products, and their classification

Species	Food supplements	Herbal medicinal products	Chemical Administration Service (CAS number of extract)	European Community Number (of extract)
<i>Aloe africana</i> Mill.	Listed on Belfrit positive list	Not listed	90320-38-0	291-064-0
<i>Aloe arborescens</i> Mill.	Listed on Belfrit positive list	Not listed	84837-08-1 (Aloe)	284-293-2 (Aloe)

<i>Aloe ferox</i> Mill.	Listed on Belfrit and German positive list	Mentioned in the community herbal monograph on <i>Aloe barbadensis</i> Miller and on <i>Aloe</i> , European Pharmacopoeia monograph on <i>Aloe capensis</i> (a synonym for <i>Aloe ferox</i>) and on aloes dry extract	84649-82-1	283-462-8
<i>Aloe perryi</i> Baker	Listed on Belfrit positive list	Not listed	90320-39-1	291-065-6
<i>Aloe plicatilis</i> (L.) Mill.	Listed on Belfrit positive list	Not listed	94166-90-2	303-388-2
<i>Aloe vera</i> (L.) <i>A. barbadensis</i> Mill., <i>A. chinensis</i> and other synonyms	Listed on Belfrit and German positive list (as <i>A. barbadensis</i>)	Community herbal monograph on <i>Aloe barbadensis</i> Miller and on <i>Aloe</i> , European Pharmacopoeia monograph on <i>Aloe barbadensis</i> and on aloes dry extract	85507-69-3 (extract), 67479-27-0 (aloe gum)	287-390-8 (extract), 266-698-6 (aloe gum)

Sources: [European Chemicals Agency](#), the [Plantlist.org](#).

Globally, aloes have been used for a long time for

- internal use: to support the digestive system or for coughs and colds, for example in combating throat irritation.
- external use: in wound-care, to sooth the skin (rashes, itching) or prevent infection.

As food supplements and herbal medicinal products, most opportunities for aloes are in supporting the digestive system. There is strong support from pharmacopoeia monographs and positive lists for supplements for such use of aloes.

Aloe products based on its traditional use for skin irritation, wound care and itching are often marketed as cosmetics products. See this example of a 'naturally cooling and soothing' [cooling cream](#) or [after-sun lotion](#) that 'gives instant cooling relief to skin after you've spent time in the sun'.

Within this indication, aloes can also be marketed as medical devices, but this is less common. Examples in the market include products to combat itching or prevent inflammation or infection in case of [chickenpox](#) or [haemorrhoids](#), or applications in [ear sprays](#). Here, claims include such things as 'conditions the skin and supports the natural healing process' and 'cooling and soothing itch relief'.

Aloe is also used internally for so called 'beauty from within' products (such as nutricosmetics). These are usually marketed as food products, for example as drinks.

Tips:

- See our study on [skin conditioning extracts](#) for more information on the cosmetic use of aloe.
- For more information, see our study on [buyer requirements for natural ingredients for](#)

[health products](#).

- Also refer to this book for more information on different *Aloe* species.
- See the website of the European Commission for [more information on medical devices](#).

2 . Which market segments to target?

Table 2 shows the application of different aloe products per health indication. It also shows under which legal framework products are most often marketed. This provides you with information on the requirements you must meet (see the section on requirements).

Table 2: Use of aloe products per indication

	Digestive system	Throat care	Skin care
Aloe gel extract	Yes, as food supplement	Yes, as medical device	Yes, as medical device and cosmetic product
Aloe whole leaf extract	Yes, as food supplement	No	Yes, as cosmetic product
Decolorized whole leaf extract	Yes, as food supplement	No	Yes, as cosmetic product
Dried aloe latex	Yes, as herbal medicine and food supplement	No	Yes, as cosmetic product

Food supplements

In Europe, aloe gels, extracts and latex are allowed in food supplements.

Note that the use of the aloe latex is only stated for *Aloe ferox* and *Aloe vera*, with the following exceptions:

- Italy allows the use of latex for all species included in Table 1.
- Germany only allows extracts and gels from *Aloe ferox* and *Aloe vera* (not their latex). Germany does not permit the use of other species.
- There are no maximum levels of aloin in supplements mentioned in respective positive lists. However, food safety authorities in European countries can set such levels . Many supplement manufacturers therefore use extracts with minimal aloin content.

The Italian positive list mentions digestive functions for the whole leaf extract (regulation of the intestinal transit, digestive function, liver function) and the gel (soothing of the digestive system, purification of body functions).

Producers of food supplements may not make medicinal claims (e.g. for treating, curing). Examples of claims used in Europe for food supplements containing aloe are 'cleanses, stimulates and soothes the digestive tract' and 'supports the cleansing of intestines ... and a mild natural digestion'.

The gel can also be used for throat care. However, aloe products for the throat are mostly marketed as a medical device (such as sprays). The following terms are for example used: 'protective and treating irritation of the throat'.

Tips:

- Discuss with European buyers which plant parts and grades (food grade or pharmaceutical grade) they need for their markets. Check relevant positive lists. You can also contact national food safety authorities.
- Do not make medicinal claims if you are targeting buyers working in the food supplements industry.

Herbal medicinal products

Only the dried, concentrated leaf juice (e.g the latex) of *Aloe ferox* and *Aloe vera* is allowed in herbal medicinal products. Aloes can be used in products for occasional constipation.

If you want to target the herbal medicine market, you need to comply with the legal requirements for the industry (see the section buyer requirements below).

Monographs list standards for ingredients for herbal medicinal products and what claims can be made for these ingredients. They also include scientific information on uses and effects. The relevant monographs can be found in Table 1.

Tips:

- See the monographs listed in Table 1 for more information on production standards, use and effects of aloes.
- Carefully consider whether you can meet the high legislative and buyer requirements for herbal medicinal products.
- Also consider whether you can compete with current suppliers. You will only find buyers if your offer is sufficiently better those of existing suppliers (in terms of price, delivery and services).
- Consider targeting the veterinary medicine market. Aloes may be used in veterinary medicine as laxative or in skin applications for inflammation or infections. For more information, please refer to this [summary report](#) of the committee for veterinary medicinal products.
- See WHO monographs for more information on additional indications for [gel](#) and [latex](#) for markets outside of Europe.

3 . What makes Europe an interesting market for aloes?

Demand for aloes is growing

International demand for aloes continues to grow across different market segments, according to European buyers.

Aloe species are not grown commercially in Europe. Therefore, the region relies on imports for its aloe supplies.

Specific data on European trade in aloes is unavailable. There is no Harmonised System code for

trade in aloes. Products are included under trade in extracts.

The latest figures on the size of the aloes market are from 2012. At that time global sales of consumer products containing *Aloe vera* were estimated at \$13 billion. No information is available on the market of other species. However, the market for other species is expected to be very small compared to the market for *Aloe vera*. To illustrate, 90% of the food supplements based on aloes are assumed to contain *Aloe vera*. For cosmetic products, *Aloe vera* makes up an even higher share of the aloes market.

[Future Market Insights](#) estimates the global *Aloe vera* extract market at €1.4 billion (\$1.6 billion) in 2016. This represents more than 60,000 tonnes. Of this, 45% is used in cosmetics. Whole leaf extract is the largest product category, accounting for 41% of volume.

Western Europe is the largest market and is expected to remain so in coming years. The largest market in Europe is Germany, accounting for 3100 tonnes and growing at around 5% in 2016. Research and Markets expects global sales to increase to \$2.3 billion in 2021.

Sales of aloes benefit from changing perception of health

The consumption of aloes in Europe is driven by an increased awareness among consumers about the importance of a healthy lifestyle. European consumers are focusing on preventing disease and feeling good. This strongly supports sales of food supplements, which have [grown by 9.5% from 2015 to 2020](#).

An increasing number of European consumers knows about the health supporting benefits of aloes, also outside of West-European markets. Aloe consumption benefits strongly from growth in the food supplement market. In some markets, such as Italy, aloes-based products make up the largest share of the botanical supplement market.

Tips:

- Are you targeting the food supplements market? Do not make any medicinal claims related to aloes in your product documentation or marketing materials.
- See our study on [trends for natural ingredients for health products](#) for more trends and tips.

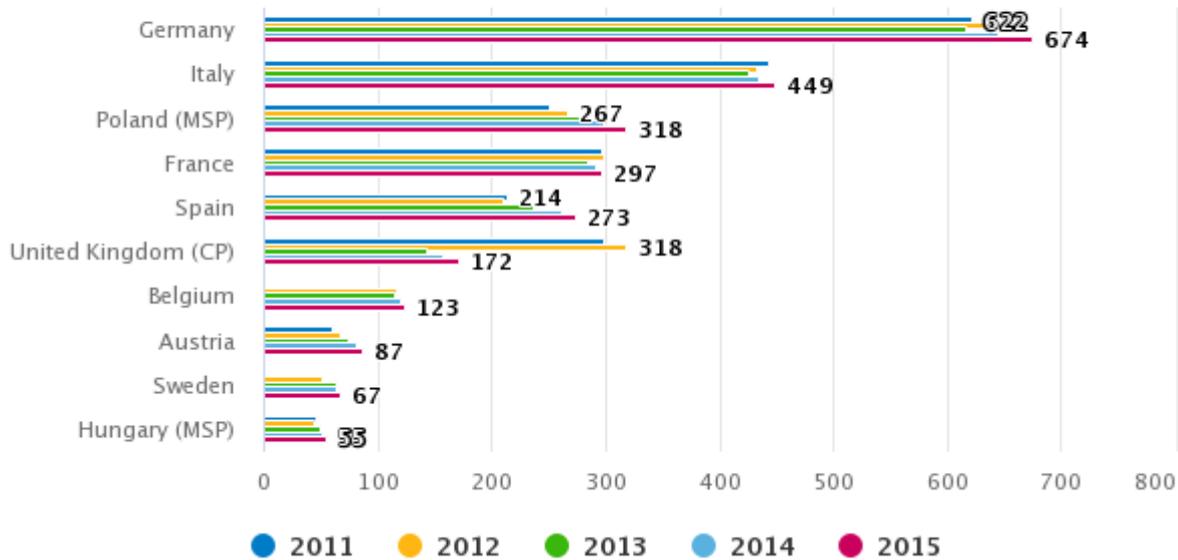
Strong link between gut health and general well-being increases interest in aloes

European consumers look to digestive remedies to help with the side effects of unhealthy diets. They also link a well-functioning digestive system with general health and well-being.

In the perception of European consumers aloes are closely linked to gut health. Therefore aloe exporters can benefit from growth in the digestive health market.

Between 2011 and 2015, the European market for digestive health products grew by 2% annually.

Figure 1: Top 10 digestive health product markets in the European Union



Source: AESGP

Source: AESGP, 2016

* Sales at consumer price level unless otherwise specified. MSP: Manufacturer Selling Price. WP: Wholesaler Price. CP: Consumer Price.

Since digestive health problems are more prevalent among older consumers, they account for the majority of sales.

Tips:

- Refer to digestive health properties of aloes in your product documentation. Most buyers will know about digestive health properties of *Aloe vera*, but not necessarily for other *Aloe* species.
- Support claims with data from trustworthy sources such as official monographs. A lot of information is available online.
- Check databases such as [Herbmed](#) to identify research on traditional use, clinical trials (safety and efficacy evaluation of herbal formulations on people) and patents.
- Check associations such as the [International Aloe Science Council](#) or the [Aloe Council of South Africa](#).
- Access scientific resources, for example through [Elsevier Science Direct](#) (not for free).
- Also, consider becoming a member of the [Society for Medicinal Plant and Natural Product Research \(GA\)](#) to access their research.

Expected supply increases of *Aloe vera*

Increasing volumes of *Aloe vera* are becoming available to the market. Producers are scaling up or entering the market to meet increasing demand for aloes. Key producers are found in the United

States, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Besides these, producers in India, South Africa, Nigeria, and several other countries have also entered the market.

In some cases, these are large vertically integrated companies (e.g. combining cultivation, processing and marketing), such as this [Mexican example](#). In other cases it concerns small producers, such as in India and Nigeria.

Tips:

- Keep a close eye on information about production increases and harvests of *Aloe vera*. This can help you anticipate supply developments and integrate that in your strategy (pricing, investments in your supply chain). You can ask your buyers for this information.
- If you supply other *Aloe* species, document and communicate how sustainable your supplies are. You will need to show your buyer a solid scenario if you want to compete with *Aloe vera* producers.

Quality issues could hurt consumer confidence in aloes

Adulteration of *Aloe vera* represents a major and growing concern to the industry. This is mostly taking place because of the high price pressure on costs of extracts. This is reducing margins for producers as prices of raw materials cannot be lowered as easily.

Common substances used by producers to adulterate aloe gel powder are maltodextrin, gums, glucose, glycerine and malic acid. The gel is mostly adulterated with water. However, industry sources indicate that manufacturers of consumer products are using similar practices.

[Brands are increasingly worried](#) that consumer trust is hurt by consumer products with low-quality aloe as an ingredient.

Tip:

- Provide product identity and appropriate certificates of analysis to support your product specifications. This will help build trust with your (potential) buyers.

Interest in fairly and sustainably produced aloes

European demand for organic and ethically produced food supplements keeps on growing. According to industry sources, this also leads to an increased demand for certified aloes.

Sustainable sourcing is a particular concern for aloe species, which are mostly sourced from the wild (such as *Aloe ferox*). Collection practices need to ensure long-term supplies in order to become attractive to buyers.

Tips:

- Check if there is sufficient interest in an organic or fair trade version of your aloe. Talk to European buyers to see if they are interested in certified aloes. Look for companies that trade in certified aloes online or at trade fairs.
- If your aloe is not certified, promote the sustainable and ethical aspects of your production

process. Buyers might ask you to support your claims with certification or documentation on your sourcing and/or corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices.

- See our study on [buyer requirements for natural ingredients for health products](#) for more information on certification standards.

4 . Which requirements must aloes comply with to be allowed on the European market?

You can only supply European aloe buyers if you comply with [buyer requirements for natural ingredients for health products](#). Which specific requirements you need to comply with depends on whether your aloe is used in herbal medicinal products or in food supplements (see below). There are also several international requirements your aloe must comply with.

International requirements

Your aloe needs to be sustainably sourced. This is especially important for *Aloe ferox* because it is predominately wild-collected. Both *Aloe ferox* and *Aloe perryi* are listed in Appendix II of the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species](#) (CITES). If you want to export these species, you need an export permit. Such a permit is issued by authorities in your country.

You may need to establish Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) agreements for your ingredient, if you use the genetic resource for research and development (R&D), for example in researching the genes or biochemical composition.

Tips:

- See our [study on buyer requirements](#) for more information about Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS).
- You can find contact points for [CITES in your country](#) on the CITES website.

Requirements specifically for herbal medicinal products

If you target the European herbal medicinal products market, you must comply with the following legal requirements:

- relevant [European legislation](#) (Directive 2004/24/EC), the simplified regime for traditional herbal medicinal products
- detailed quality, documentation, labelling, packaging, certification and traceability standards as established in [the rules governing medicinal products in the European Union](#)
- [marketing authorisation](#) of medicinal products to be sold in the EU market
- [Good Agricultural and Collection Practices \(GACP\)](#) for raw plant materials
- Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) for [extracts](#) or [active substances used as starting materials](#)
- monographs as mentioned in the product description above.

Requirements specifically for food supplements

If you target the European food supplements market, you must comply with the following legal requirements:

- [European legislation for food supplements](#) (composition and labelling requirements)

- general food law
- food safety (see below)

Food safety requirements cover:

- [maximum residue levels](#)
- [contaminants in food](#) and [microbiological contamination of food](#)
- [hygiene of Food](#) (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP))
- [extraction solvents](#)
- [irradiation of food](#)
- [traceability](#).

Additional requirements

Many European buyers have additional quality requirements. These can go beyond legislation and standards. These are established in buyer specifications. This includes requirements regarding:

- active ingredient content
- moisture content
- contaminants
- residues.

To show that you meet the specifications of buyers, you need to develop well-structured company and product information, including detailed technical data sheets.

European food industries increasingly demand compliance with quality and food safety management. Examples include:

- [ISO 9001:2008](#) (required for health ingredients)
- [International Featured Standards](#) (IFS) related to food (e.g. IFS Food; IFS Global Markets Food)
- [ISO 22000](#) (food safety)
- [ISO 31000](#) (risk management)

Tips:

- See our [tips for doing business](#) for more information about providing structured information.
- Determine the need for food safety management system for your segment, and if possible for your specific buyer, before investing in such systems and their certification.

Requirements for niche markets

If you want to enter niche markets, you will need to meet standards and requirements for social and environmental sustainability. These include:

- organic production
- verification and/or certification of sustainable production (including [FairWild](#), [FLO Fairtrade](#), [FairForLife](#), [UNCTAD BioTrade Initiative](#), [Union for Ethical BioTrade](#))
- supplier codes of conduct
- [ISO 26000](#) on social responsibility.

Quality requirements for aloes

Composition

Consistent quality is a major concern for European buyers of aloes. For European buyers to consider your aloe of good quality it needs to have a certain composition and chemical profile.

Good quality aloes need to have a specific composition. You can find the description of the specific composition in industry standards for:

- [Aloe vera](#) (for internal use) (e.g. according to industry standards aloin content of the gel extract should be lower than 10mg per litre for food use and 50mg for cosmetic use).
- [Aloe ferox](#) (e.g. a minimum aloin content of 18% for the juice)

Please note that buyers might still refer to *Aloe vera* standards for other aloes, for example in terms of aloin content or demand and even lower aloin content.

Quality standards for herbal medicine are described in:

- [European Union Pharmacopoeia monographs](#) (e.g. aloin content of 28% for concentrated dried latex of either *Aloe ferox* or *Aloe vera*)
- WHO monographs for [Aloe \(latex\)](#) and [Aloe vera gel](#)

Differences in quality and composition (for example polysaccharide content) can result from:

- oxidation by damaging other leaves while harvesting
- delays in processing after harvesting.

For the latex specifically, quality and composition differences are mainly influenced by:

- tapping methods, such as leaf plant size
- harvesting intensity.

Tips:

- Work together with a local university to test your aloe. A local university can help determine its chemical profile, which needs to be included in your product documentation.
- Standardise your product's quality and minimise significant variations in it, in particular by monitoring harvest and post-harvest practices and minimising time between harvest and processing. Developing standard operating procedures (SOP) and training farm staff is vital. Use incentives to ensure that they follow your specifications on collection and post-harvest processes.
- Always match activities such as standardisation to the requirements of your buyer.
- Check these documents on [Aloe ferox](#) and [Aloe vera](#). They offer a wealth of information on production and processing.
- Keep your facilities, storage rooms and equipment clean.
- Prevent adulteration to preserve your reputation. Importers regularly analyse products for adulteration. They will not accept that the product does not meet agreed specifications.

Labelling requirements

If you want to export your aloe to Europe, you will need to do the following to comply with the labelling requirements.

- Set up a registration system for individual batches of your aloe, whether they are blends or not. Mark them accordingly to ensure traceability.
- Label your products in English, unless your buyer wants you to use a different language.

Your labels must include:

- product name/INCI name
- batch code

- place of origin
- name and address of exporter
- date of manufacture
- best before date
- net weight
- recommended storage conditions.

If you supply organic aloes, your label needs to include the name/code of the inspection body and certification number.

You also need to give your buyer the following documentation:

- technical data sheet (TDS) (check this example for [Aloe ferox juice extract](#))
- CAS number
- certificates of analysis (check examples for [Aloe ferox gel powder](#))
- safety data sheet (SDS) (see for example for [gel](#), and [extract](#))
- GMO certificate (if requested)
- certificate of origin
- product information sheet.

Aloe gel is not classified as hazardous, no hazard symbols are required on your label.

Packaging requirements

Packaging requirements may differ per buyer and aloe product. However, there are some general requirements you have to take into account which are encompassed in standards.

- Always ask your buyer for their specific packaging requirements.
- Re-use or recycle packaging materials. For example, use containers made from recyclable material (e.g. metal).
- Use containers of a material that does not react with components of the extract (e.g. lacquered or lined steel, stainless steel, aluminium).
- Clean and dry the containers before filling them with aloe.
- Store containers in a dry, cool place to prevent quality deterioration.
- If you offer organic certified aloes, physically separate these from aloes that are not certified.

5 . What competition will you face on the European market for aloes?

Market entry barriers

Market entry barriers are very different for *Aloe* species.

Aloe vera

Although there is a strong demand for *Aloe vera*, competition is also fierce and scale of processing is important. If you are a small farmer producing raw materials you need to engage with aloe processors relatively nearby to be able to ensure product quality. Vertically integrated companies have a larger scale and work with outgrowers and/or have plantations to grow the product.

Although requiring much larger investments to establish, new producers in countries such as South Africa, Mexico, India and China have entered the market in recent years. This is possible as cultivation, harvest and post-harvest and processing steps are well-known. There is also a dedicated service industry offering support to the sector.

The market for *Aloe vera* gel is very concentrated. The market for *Aloe vera* extracts is much more fragmented. However, the largest companies are investing heavily in their production capacity to increase market share.

Wild-collected aloe species

For wild-collected aloes, such as most commercially available *Aloe ferox*, sustainable access to

sufficient quantities of raw materials is a key barrier for new players to enter the market. You will need to have collection rights to collect *Aloe ferox*. You also need to identify, organise and train collectors. To meet CITES obligations for *Aloe ferox*, you also need to get export permits by showing you are collecting in a sustainable way.

The required scale of production in order to be able to compete in the international market is lower for these species than for *Aloe vera*. This makes it easier to enter the market once your supply chain is secured.

Food supplements vs. herbal medicinal products

An additional difference in market entry barriers depends on whether your aloes are used in food (supplements) or in herbal medicine.

Competition from new entrants is low if you produce ingredients for herbal medicinal product. Once European buyers have established a supply chain, they are less likely to switch to new suppliers. This reduces opportunities for new entrants. The costs for European buyers of changing established supply contracts, and (perceived) risks of changing suppliers often do not weigh up against the reduction in supply costs. Costs can be especially high because a new Common Technical Document has to be produced. Manufacturers of herbal medicinal products are required to produce such a document to receive permission to market the product.

For food supplements, you can expect more competition from new entrants. Supplier-buyer relationships today are less stable than in herbal medicinal products and the costs of compliance are relatively low. Manufacturers will switch more quickly when demand is high and they need to identify new sources of aloes.

Tips:

- If you are producing a wild-collected aloe, organise collectors into cooperatives or producer groups to improve production volumes and qualities. Larger groups of collectors allow for efficient value-addition activities such as sorting, grading and cleaning.
- Gain control over harvesting, starting by obtaining collection permits. For example train collectors in the use of sustainable resource management methods.
- Look into the possibilities of [FairWild](#) certification to show your European buyers your collection process is sustainable. Always discuss this option with your buyers first. Determine whether they find this certification important.
- Before engaging in aloe cultivation and processing, conduct a thorough feasibility study in terms of your returns on investment and your financial and human resource capacities to produce according to international buyer requirements.
- If you can only cultivate on a small scale, engage with local processors to sell your leaves or cooperate with other growers to share the costs of investment in processing equipment.

What are substitute products for aloes?

Substitutions between *Aloe* species

In terms of their use in food supplements and herbal medicine, several aloe species are substitutes for each other. For example, *Aloe vera* and *Aloe ferox* can both be used in herbal medicinal products. For food supplements, more species are permitted.

In practice substitution is mostly about making a case to buyers to use other species than *Aloe vera*, in particular for food supplements. The use of *Aloe vera* is much more established and the

product is better understood by European manufacturers and consumers.

European food supplement manufacturers that market products based on *Aloe ferox* or *Aloe arborescens* are mostly niche players. These niche players differentiate themselves based on differences in [composition](#) or in [production methods](#).

Companies that market *Aloe arborescens* are mostly concentrated in Italy. Additionally, the species is more popular in Asian markets. According to industry sources, this species is more comparable to *Aloe vera*, while *Aloe ferox* has a more distinct profile.

Currently, no examples were found for companies marketing *Aloe perryi*, *Aloe africana* or *Aloe plicatilis* in Europe.

Tips:

- If you are producing a wild aloe, consider using this in your marketing to European buyers. Focus on the origin of your product in its natural habitat or show how it benefits collection communities.
- Have product information available which shows the composition of your aloe in comparison to *Aloe vera*. Be able to communicate clearly about differences in the composition and what they mean for the formulator (e.g. processing, efficacy).

Substitute products for aloes used for digestive health

Most alternatives to herbal food supplements for digestive health are natural, non-botanical supplements. Major products are supplements that contain dietary fibres, probiotics and prebiotics and natural alternatives for digestive enzymes, which can be obtained from fruits such as papaya or pineapple. For examples, check the [website of Holland & Barrett](#) (United Kingdom retailer).

In addition to these non-botanical supplements, several plants are also used for digestive health. The most commonly used plants include:

- peppermint (*Mentha piperita*)
- Roman camomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*)
- green tea (*Camellia sinensis*)
- turmeric (*Curcuma longa*)
- ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)
- boldo leaf (*Peumus boldus*)
- fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)
- black psyllium (*Plantago psyllium/ovata*)
- senna (*Senna alexandrina*)
- milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*).

Aloe can stand out from other products as it is supported by monographs and as [various studies have shown](#) that its extracts have effect. This is very important, as European consumers want products with measurable benefits.

Substitute products for aloes used for cough and cold

Cough and cold products can be divided in products targeting the:

- causes, for example focusing on the immune system (such as vitamins, Echinacea (*Echinacea purpurea*) and ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius* and *P. ginseng*));
- symptoms, (such as itching, sore throat, infection).

Aloe products are included under the second group.

In terms of non-botanical supplements, examples include Manuka honey and propolis, while botanical substitutes are for example:

- eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*, *E. adiate*, *E. smithii*)
- liquorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)
- peppermint (*Mentha piperita*)
- thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)
- cajuput (*Melaleuca leucadendra*)
- pelargonium (*Pelargonium sidoides*)
- garlic (*Allium sativum*).

Aloes can benefit from consumers knowing about the soothing benefits of the gel. However, compared to eucalyptus, liquorice, peppermint and thyme, the claims that can be made are less strong. The claims for these substitute products are supported by Pharmacopoeia monographs, which mention cough and cold specifically.

Tips:

- See our study on [competition on the European natural ingredients for health products](#) market.
- See our [tips for doing business with European buyers](#) for natural ingredients for health products.
- Show your insights into developments within the competitive environment in your communication and promotional materials
- Build a marketing story for your aloe.
- Conduct a literature study on the potential of aloes in digestive health and cough and colds. Use this in your promotional materials and product documentation. This is particularly important for cough and colds. Alternative products are better supported by monographs. Be specific regarding which segment (herbal medicine and/or food supplements) and indication(s) you communicate about.
- For other natural ingredients allowed for digestive health check this [overview of herbal medicinal products for paediatric use](#) by EMA (the European Medicines Agency).

Company competition

Your main competition will come from other aloe producers. Production figures are not available per country, and available information is not comparable as it relates to different aloe products.

The largest producers of *Aloe vera* are the United States, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Smaller producers include Nigeria (most for local market use), Spain, South Africa, India and China.

Aloe ferox, *Aloe africana* and *Aloe plicatilis* are endemic to Southern Africa. Commercial collection is limited to *Aloe ferox* in South Africa. A first cultivation trial of *Aloe ferox* is currently being undertaken.

Aloe arborescens is endemic to the summer rainfall region of Southern Africa (South Africa, Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe). Commercial production now mostly takes place in Japan (for the local market), Italy, and more recently in China and Israel.

Aloe perryi is endemic to the island of Socotra, a part of Yemen. Some older literature indicates it is cultivated in countries around the Red Sea and in Eastern Africa. Volumes produced are much

lower than for *Aloe ferox*.

Tips:

- If you are supplying *Aloe vera*, *Aloe ferox* or *Aloe arborescens* you are competing with other producers of the same species and you will need to find a unique selling point.
- Ensure proper harvest, post-harvest and processing and document these steps according to good agricultural and collection practices (GACP) to exploit opportunities to add value to your product.
- Show traceability and sustainable future access to raw materials, in particular if you are working with wild-collected raw materials.
- Ensure that you can get an adequate return on your investments for quality improvements and processing. Carry out improvements on quality according to your buyer's requirements (specifications) and what they are willing to pay for.

To stand out on the European market you can also certify your company according to social and environmental sustainability principles. For *Aloe vera* producers, organic certification has proven to be a viable strategy for small Spanish *Aloe vera* producers. Please note that options for certification are different for food supplements and herbal medicinal products.

- For food supplements opportunities for certification increase if the product is positioned as a food-type product, rather than as a medicinal-type product.
- Herbal medicinal products cannot use certifications on their labels. Sustainable certification will add value if you target manufacturers with a philosophy that calls for such certification, such as organic.
- Fair trade and FairWild certification can help indicate to your buyer that the production of ingredients is generating rural income and does not harm local communities (this could jeopardise the buyer's image).
- Certification demonstrating sustainable sourcing (such as FairWild) can help show potential buyers that you could be a reliable future partner.

Tips:

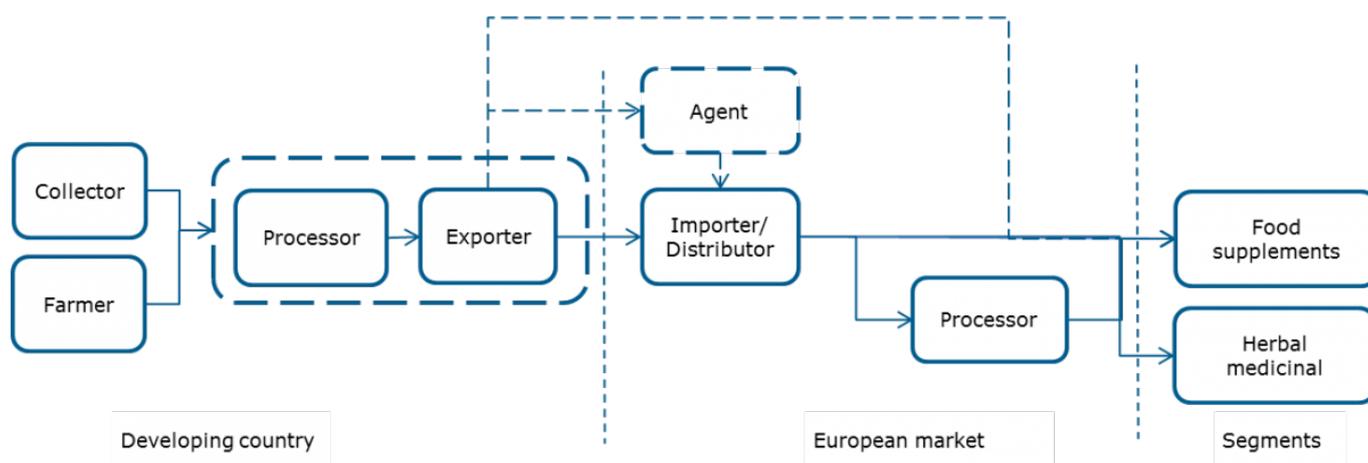
- Always verify whether your European buyer is interested in certified ingredients.
- If they are not interested, you can still help manufacturers build their case by documenting and visualising your product and company's unique value proposition, for example in terms of sustainable wild collection and supporting communities. Final manufacturers with a company image focused on ethical or environmental aspects can use this to market their final products to European consumers.

If you produce a less common *Aloe* species, you will have less competition on the European market from fellow producers. Focus on positioning your aloe in relation to other aloes and provide a clear business case for your buyer.

6 . What channels can you use to put aloes on the European market for health products?

Market channels

Figure 2: Market channels for aloes for health



Source: ProFound

Exports of raw materials are limited, because of the high risk of quality deterioration. Aloes are therefore exported as a gel or whole-leaf extract (dried or not dried) and dried aloe latex. In many cases processing and exporting is handled by the same company. Further processed extracts are produced in the United States, Europe and in more developed sourcing countries such as India and China.

Importers and distributors are your most important entry point into the European aloes market (see Figure 2). These can trade in up to 500 natural ingredients, along with other ingredients, synthetic and otherwise. They focus on global sourcing, analysis and quality control, rectification, blending, product documentation and sales to processors and end-product manufacturers.

Working directly with manufacturers in Europe is harder. It can, however, be viable for less-common *Aloe* species. Exporting these allows you to target small, niche supplement manufacturers such as [Martera](#) in Belgium.

Are you a small exporter and new to the European market? Consider working with an agent to represent you.

Tips:

- Benefit from the experience and knowledge of specialised European importers and agents instead of approaching manufacturers directly. Find these importers on the websites of the trade fairs listed below.
- Consider working with an agent or representative with a good reputation to help you enter the market.
- See our studies on [market channels and segments for natural ingredients for health products](#) and [tips for finding buyers](#) for more information.
- Visit or participate in trade fairs to find out whether the market is open to your product. You can also use these fairs to access market information and find potential buyers. The most relevant trade fairs in Europe are [SANA](#), [Health Ingredients Europe](#), [Biofach](#) (for organic products) and [Vitafoods](#). In addition, the [In-Cosmetics](#) trade fair is an important meeting place for aloes for cosmetics.

7 . What are the end-market prices for aloes?

The aloes trade is not transparent. The large variety of products in the market makes comparison difficult. Prices quoted can be based on a wide range of specifications. *Aloe ferox* (dried latex) prices can range from €15 to €20 per kilogram depending on the aloin content.

In contrast, gel extract (non-concentrated) of *Aloe vera* or *Aloe barbadensis* can be as low as €0.50 or €0.80 per kilogram when shipped to Europe (CIF: cost, insurance and freight). Prices increase strongly when the extract is concentrated as it benefits the final product. Organic adds an additional margin; for example, for 200X concentrated extract in powder form, the organic premium would be between €20 and €35 per kilogram.

Prices of *Aloe vera*-based ingredients are under pressure as manufacturers operate in a very competitive market for *Aloe vera* products. In the future, *Aloe vera* prices could decrease further considering current production increases. Prices for other aloes are substantially higher than for *Aloe vera*.

Tips:

- Ensure that your price reflects the quality levels, processing level and delivery conditions.
- Consider producing certified aloes to stand out in the market and obtain a higher price for your product.
- Monitor cultivation trials of *Aloe ferox* in South Africa as this might affect product availability and prices.
- Monitor harvests in major production countries to anticipate price developments for your aloes. Request such information from importers.

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#).