Exporting botanical gums for cosmetics to Europe

European gum imports from developing countries are growing. The European cosmetics market offers opportunities for gum exporters, because cosmetics manufacturers increasingly use natural gums as alternatives to synthetic texturizing ingredients. European manufacturers welcome new gums with emulsifying properties. You must show that your new gum has real, functional benefits in a particular type of final product.

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1. Product description

Gums are used in food and cosmetic products, mainly to provide a specific texture. Similar gums are used in both industries. Manufacturers can prefer specific gums over others. They can also choose to use ready-to-use ingredients based on processed gums. This depends on the market segment of the final product and what other ingredients are used in the product.

This study focuses on gums for cosmetics. Resins that are used for their fragrance are not included in this study. For more information on those products, see our studies on the European market for resin oils for cosmetics and the German market for gums and resins.

There are different botanical sources for gums. They can be tapped from trees, such as in the case of:

- Gum arabic (most commonly from Acacia senegal and A. seyal)
- Gum ghatti (from Anogeissus latifolia)
- Gum karaya (from Sterculia urens)

They can also be produced from beans or seeds, such as:

- Tara gum (from the seeds of Caesalpinia spinosa)
- Guar gum (from guar beans of Cyamopsis tetragonoloba)
- Locust bean gum (from the seeds of Ceratonia siliqua)
Gums can also be produced by bacterial fermentation, such as xanthan gum. These gums are used in the European cosmetics industry. We have not included them in this study, because they are not commonly produced in developing countries.

Botanical gums can be wild-collected or cultivated. Wild-collected gums include gum arabic and gum ghatti. The raw materials for tara, guar and locust bean gum are mainly cultivated.

See Table 1 for the classification names and codes of three gums used in cosmetics. These codes and ingredient names are used as product identifications in documentation (as listed in COSING and with CAS number) and in trade (Harmonised system codes).

Table 1: Classifications of common gums used in cosmetics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Gum arabic</th>
<th>Gum ghatti</th>
<th>Gum karaya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **COSING**: European Commission database with information on cosmetic substances and ingredients | COSING lists different ingredients for gum arabic, including:  
• Acacia senegal gum  
• Acacia seyal gum | Ghatti gum | Sterculia urens gum |
| CAS number | 9000-01-5 (Acacia senegal gum) | 9000-28-6 | 9000-36-6 |
| Harmonised system codes (trade) | 1301.20: ‘Gum arabic’ | No specific HS code exists; it is traded under 1301.90: ‘other natural gums and resins’ | No specific HS code exists; it is traded under 1301.90: ‘other natural gums and resins’ |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Tara gum</th>
<th>Guar gum</th>
<th>Locust bean gum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COSING</strong>: European Commission database with information on cosmetic substances and ingredients</td>
<td>Caesalpinia spinosa gum</td>
<td>Cyamopsis tetragonoloba gum</td>
<td>Ceratonia siliqua gum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS number</td>
<td>39300-88-4</td>
<td>9000-30-0</td>
<td>9000-40-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonised system codes (trade)</td>
<td>No specific HS code exists; it is traded under 1302.39: ‘other mucilages and thickeners from vegetable products’</td>
<td>1302.3290: ‘mucilages and thickeners of guar seeds’</td>
<td>1302.3210: ‘mucilages and thickeners of locust beans or locust bean seeds’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips:
- Also see our studies on [gum arabic](#), [tara gum](#), [locust bean gum](#) and [konjac gum](#) for the food industry.
2. What makes Europe an interesting market for botanical gums?

European trade in botanical gums is recorded under several different product groups. Data presented in this section covers the following product groups (for HS codes see Table 1):

- Gum arabic
- Other gums, such as gum ghatti and gum karaya
- Guar gum
- Locust bean gum
- Other seed gums (mucilages and thickeners from vegetable products), such as tara gum

In general, gum arabic and guar gum are the main gums on the European market. These are used in a wide range of industries.

From 2011 to 2015, European imports of gums fluctuated between 280,000 and 300,000 tonnes. Import value amounted to €950 million in 2015.

![Figure 1: Leading European importers of botanical gums](chart)

Europe’s main gum importer in 2015 was France. France in particular dominates the imports of gum arabic. The French company Nexira controls most of the trade in gum arabic. In 2015, gum arabic accounted for 73% of France’s gum imports. Specialised French importers add value to their gum arabic imports, such as giving technical advice on applications. They also have a strong supply network.

France also imports relatively large shares of locust bean gum and other seed gums. The country is also an important market for the cosmetic use of gums, because it is the largest European (natural) cosmetics producer.

Other leading importers include:

- Germany is a strong importer of locust bean gum, guar gum and other seed gums. This country is an important re-exporter but also has a strong demand for gums, including from its large cosmetics industry. It offers strong opportunities for direct imports from developing countries.

Source: Eurostat
In 2015, 68% of Germany’s imports originated in developing countries. German gum imports decreased in the last five years by 6% annually. German imports fluctuated substantially in this time frame, especially in terms of import value.

- The Netherlands plays a major role in imports and re-exports of other gums. In 2015, the country accounted for 42% of Europe’s imports in this product group. Moreover, the country offers growing opportunities for developing countries. Dutch imports from developing countries increased at the expense of supplies from other countries. In 2015 Brazil was the main developing country supplier of other gums to the Netherlands (source: ITC Trademap). This country produces various gums, such as pine resin.
- Portugal is the second largest importer of other gums. These imports grew by almost 69% from 2014 to 2015. However, Portugal sources most of its gums from Europe. Opportunities for suppliers from developing countries are therefore limited here.
- Spain is a large importer of guar gums, other gums and other seed gums. Over the last five years, Spain’s imports grew much faster than Europe’s average (+21%). This growth was mainly the result of increasing direct imports from developing countries.
- Italian gum imports average between 30-35,000 tonnes, but dropped to under 25,000 tonnes in 2015. This was mainly the result of a vast drop in guar imports by Italy (-58% from 2014 to 2015) from developing countries.
- Though a smaller market, Lithuania has greatly increased imports of gums over recent years (+133% from 2011 to 2015). There was strong growth in guar gum imports. In 2015, practically all of Lithuania’s imports originated in developing countries. Lithuania imports most of its guar gum from India and exports it to Norway and Poland.

Developing countries play a large role in the supplies of gums to Europe. In 2015, 59% of all European gum imports originated in developing countries. European imports from developing countries increased by 3.4% annually from 2011 to 2015. Imports reached 179,000 tonnes at €448 million in 2015.

There is a high risk for conflicts in collection areas for some gums, such as for gum arabic from Sudan, Somalia or Eritrea. Conflicts in these countries have led to lower supplies in the past. As such, there are opportunities for suppliers of gums located outside of these conflict areas.

**Figure 2: Leading suppliers of botanical gums to Europe**

in 1,000 tonnes

![Diagram showing leading suppliers of botanical gums to Europe from 2011 to 2015](Source: Eurostat)
European imports of guar gum have fluctuated considerably in the last five years. Overall, imports have decreased by 2% annually.

From 2011 to 2015, gum arabic exports from developing countries increased by 5% annually.

Trade data shows an increase of European imports of locust bean gum: +7% annually from 2011 to 2015. Spain and Italy are still the largest suppliers to Europe, but the region also imports locust bean gum from Morocco, Turkey and India.

Imports of other gums increased by 3% annually from 2011 to 2015. Brazil is the main supplier of other gums, followed by European (re-)exporters Germany and the Netherlands. European imports from Brazil increased substantially from 2011 to 2015 (+24% annually).

European imports of other seed gums from developing countries increased by 5.3% annually from 2011 to 2015. In 2015, the main developing country suppliers were India, China, the Philippines and Indonesia. Together, they supplied 27,700 tonnes at almost €164 million.

For more information on competitive sources of these suppliers to Europe, see the section on company competition.

Tips:

- Focus your exports on important and growing importers of gums from developing countries. Examples are the Netherlands, Germany, Spain and Lithuania.

- If you produce guar gum, target Germany, Spain or Lithuania. These are strong importers of guar from developing countries.

- If you produce gum arabic, targeting France could be of interest. You can also consider targeting small but growing gum arabic importers.

3. What trends offer opportunities on the European market for botanical gums?

Texture from natural ingredients

There is a growing demand in Europe for natural ingredients for cosmetics in general, as well as natural cosmetics. These natural cosmetics contain a certain amount of natural ingredients, at a much higher percentage than conventional cosmetics.

Growing demand for natural cosmetics

European cosmetic producers increasingly use gums to replace synthetic thickeners and emulsifiers to cater to consumer demand for (certified) natural cosmetics. This offers opportunities for gum exporters, especially if you can offer a new gum.

To illustrate, the global natural cosmetics market was estimated at $30 (€26) billion in 2014. It is expected to grow 10% annually until 2019. Certified natural cosmetics make up 45% of this market, while the remaining 55% consists of near-natural cosmetics. The total European cosmetics market alone is valued at €72 billion, and makes up around 30% of the total world market.

Germany, France and the United Kingdom have the most launches of natural cosmetic products and a strong focus on innovation.

For natural and organic cosmetics, there are limitations on the texturizing ingredients manufacturers can use. Therefore, they welcome new gums with emulsifying properties. Opportunities for new gums are highest in natural and near-natural cosmetics, a growing market segment.
Growing demand for natural ingredients

Certain groups of consumers believe that natural ingredients are safer and healthier than synthetic substitutes, even though European regulations for cosmetics ensure that all ingredients used are safe.

Conventional European cosmetics brands increasingly use natural ingredients at low percentages to make a marketing claim. This offers opportunities for suppliers of natural cosmetic ingredients. Even in low percentages per product, the total volumes that conventional brands require can still be interestingly high for gum producers compared to what small, niche brands require that use higher percentages of natural ingredients per product.

Also in these conventional cosmetics, natural gums are increasingly popular in cosmetics to replace synthetic alternatives, especially to satisfy the requirements of natural and organic certifiers.

Tips:
- If you can offer a new gum or texturizing ingredient, do a feasibility study to find out if it has enough potential in the market. Look into the gum’s functionality and chemical profile and examine its safety.
- See our study on market channels and segments for information on natural and conventional cosmetics brands. You can also find information on what’s important for a gum’s functionality.
- See our study on trends for natural ingredients for cosmetics for more market trends.

Strong importance of ethical products

European demand for organic and ethically produced cosmetics continues to grow at a higher rate than the overall market. However, the share of the total cosmetics market is still very low.

Especially for wild-collected gums, ethical production is of key importance. This comes both from a consumer demand and a need at the production side to ensure long-term supplies. Collectors of certain gums (such as gum arabic) live in remote areas in unstable conflict or post-conflict regions, with a harsh environment to collect the resin.

The essence of fair trade is that marginalised communities:
- Participate in the supply chain;
- Receive fair prices; and
- Benefit from the trade.

You don’t necessarily need to certify your ingredients as fair trade. European cosmetics producers can choose to:
- Certify their final product;
- Use fair trade certified ingredients without certifying the final product or
- Use non-certified ingredients with fair trade conditions in the supply chain.

This has led to an increase in demand for fair trade (certified) ingredients. These are often combined with natural or organic labels.

Tips:
- Always discuss your options for certification with your buyers. Check their interest in fair trade or organic certified gums.
If you want to obtain organic or Fairtrade certification, see our study on buyer requirements for natural ingredients for cosmetics for more information.

If you choose not to certify your gums, promote the sustainable and ethical aspects of your production process. Buyers might ask you to support your claims with certification or documentation on your CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) practices.

Also provide your buyers with stories, pictures or videos to show the social aspects of your gums, to help cosmetics producers communicate these stories in their marketing.

Check the websites of buyers to find out if they work with certified ingredients. Buyers that don’t are unlikely to pay a premium for such certification.

Have a look at our study on trends for natural ingredients for cosmetics for more information on organic and fair trade cosmetics.

Growing demand for ingredients with an interesting or exotic origin

Because European consumers look for cosmetic products with exotic ingredients, producers use a product’s origin in their marketing. Consumers associate these ingredients with the rich biodiversity of the regions where they come from, for example with the biodiversity of the Amazon or the Andes.

Consumers are also interested in a product’s origin, traditional or specific local production processes, traditional use and local beauty rituals.

Cosmetics producers use exotic ingredients in their marketing. For example, marketing for tara gum from Peru often focuses on its origin in the Andes.

Tips:

- If your gum has an exotic origin or traditional use, stress this in your marketing materials. Include pictures of the region where the plant comes from, where it grows in the wild or how it is produced/used locally.

4. What requirements must botanical gums comply with to be allowed on the European market?

Requirements for cosmetic ingredients

You can only export your gums to the European cosmetics market if you comply with the legal requirements for natural ingredients for cosmetics. These include:

- Relevant European cosmetics legislation (Regulation (EC) 1223/2009) to ensure safety and efficacy of cosmetic products
- Documentation: supplying your buyers with well-structured product and company documentation so they can comply with legal requirements
- Registration Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH) to protect human health and the environment
- Classification, Labelling and Packaging of chemicals (CLP) to make potential dangers clear to workers and consumers who might use them
Global requirements
The Nagoya Protocol contains terms and conditions for companies that want to make use of genetic resources or traditional knowledge. It aims to make sure the benefits of genetic resources and traditional knowledge are shared in a fair way. This is called Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS).

You will only need to comply with requirements on ABS if you use the genetic resource for Research and Development (R&D), for example if you research the genes of botanical gums or their biochemical composition. Anyone who carries out R&D, including the buyer downstream in your supply chain, has obligations under Access and Benefit Sharing under the Nagoya Protocol.

There are strict international rules for trade in protected species according to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Most commercial gums are not based on such protected species. However, if you offer newer gums, you need to check if you need to get export and import permits before you export them to Europe.

Tips:
- Check the status of your (new) species with the CITES checklist.
- See our study on buyer requirements for natural ingredients for cosmetics for more information.

Additional buyer requirements
Many European buyers have additional requirements, which go beyond legislation and standards. Most buyers will only do business with you if you can meet these additional requirements. These are established in buyer specifications and include the following:

- Buyers expect you to have a good and reliable level of quality, including documented procedures. You should at least follow practices such as Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points. If you follow the Good Manufacturing Practices of the European Federation for Cosmetic Ingredients you can gain a competitive advantage.
- Most buyers will only do business with sustainable suppliers. You don’t necessarily need to certify sustainable practices.
- You can gain a competitive advantage by showing good standards of social and environmental responsibility and your performance in Corporate Social Responsibility.

Requirements for niche markets
Standards for niche markets include those for:

- Natural cosmetics, the largest and most important niche market: NaTrue, Cosmos and BDIH
- Organic cosmetics: Soil Association (UK), Ecocert (France) and BDiH (Germany)
- Fair production, small niche market in terms of certified ingredients: Fairtrade and FairWild (for wild-collected ingredients)

Quality requirements for botanical gums
Consistent quality is a major concern for European buyers of gums. You will need to do proper sorting and grading of the gums to minimise quality variations per grade. Gums have to be graded according to size, colour and state of cleanliness.

You also need to prevent contamination in your post-harvest processing to improve quality. You can determine the consistency of your products by comparing their specific compositions. For more information on what buyers could expect in terms of composition, see our studies for the food market on locust bean gum, gum arabic, and tara gum.
Tips:

- Prevent contamination by sand and bark by training collectors in proper cutting, keeping facilities and equipment clean and cleaning the gum if necessary.

- Minimise variation in quality within a lot by following strict grading and sorting standards for raw material selection. Size and colour are major grading criteria for gums in addition to impurity content and source area.

- Closely monitor collection/harvesting practices through regular inspections to assure quality. Standardise your product by blending gums from different harvests (e.g. early and late harvests, or different areas). Always make sure that the quality of the standardised gums (blend) matches the requirements of your buyer.

- Be clear about what quality you can supply on a sustainable basis. Once you develop a quality standard, you must be able to maintain that same level of quality, also when you scale up your production.

- Prevent adulteration and contamination by foreign materials to uphold your reputation. Importers regularly analyse products for adulteration.

- Work together with a local university department to determine the composition of your gum. You need to include this in your product documentation.

- If you produce organic gums, dedicate your processing plant to only producing organic gums, to avoid contamination from non-organic particles. If you cannot do this, clean your machinery and equipment thoroughly between conventional and organic production.

- Use incentives when you train your collectors to ensure that they follow your specifications on collection and post-harvest processes.

- Check [Good Practices for Gums](#) from the Association for International Promotion of Gums for more information.

Labelling requirements for botanical gums

If you want to export gums to Europe, you’ll need to include product documentation and you’ll need to label your product.

Your product documentation needs to include:

- Technical data sheet (TDS), check this [example for guar gum](#)
- CAS number (if available)
- Certificates of analysis, check this [example for gum arabic](#)
- Safety data sheet (SDS)
- GMO certificate (if requested)
- Certificate of origin
- Product information sheet

If you send botanical gums to European buyers, the product must contain a label with:

- 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

**Tips:**
- Set up a registration system for individual batches of your gums, whether they are blends or not, and mark them accordingly to ensure traceability.
- Label your products in English, unless your buyer wants you to use a different language.
- See our study on buyer requirements for natural ingredients for cosmetics for information on legal requirements for classification, labelling and packaging (CLP).
- If you produce organic gums, include the name/code of the inspection body and certification number.
- For additional information, see our workbook for the preparation of a technical dossier and related technical documents for a cosmetic ingredient.

**Packaging requirements for botanical gums**
European buyers have their own packaging requirements, besides legal requirements on packaging of chemicals. One of the main requirements is to preserve the quality of your product. To do this, you’ll need to package gums in waterproof material. For example, use paper bags that are lined with plastic.

**Tips:**
- Always ask your buyer for their specific packaging requirements.
- Re-use or recycle packaging materials; for example, use containers of recyclable material (such as jute or kraft paper bags).
- Store bags or containers in a dry, cool place to prevent quality deterioration.
- Physically separate organic certified gums from gums that are not certified.
- See our study on buyer requirements for natural ingredients for cosmetics for information on legal requirements on classification, labelling and packaging (CLP).

5. What competition do you face on the European market for botanical gums?

**Market entry**
Market entry barriers for botanical gums are quite low, in terms of European legislative requirements and the technology you need. But, you can only access the European market if you can supply stable quantities of gums at a consistent quality.

In particular for wild-collected gums, it is important that you can demonstrate the sustainability of your raw material supply base.

If you want to bring a new or niche gum to the market, you need to prove its functionality to
interest buyers. You need to include product, technical, safety and performance data. It is critical that you show:

- That the product is safe at the recommended concentrations of use;
- The performance as a functional ingredient (because that is the main use for gums) instead of being an active ingredient with cosmetic benefits;
- The Unique Selling Point (USP).

You also need to show good practices in terms of:

- the supply chain (such as traceability and documentation)
- processing
- use
- availability
- Corporate Social Responsibility (including labour conditions)
- traceability.

If you can already meet European buyer requirements, you have a competitive advantage over new entrants. It will be hard for them to keep up. You can build a stronger advantage if you can go beyond European buyer requirements. Think about good manufacturing practices, or standards on social or environmental responsibility. See our tips in the chapter about company competition below for more information.

Tips:

- If you work with suppliers, give them clear product specifications and guidance and standard operating procedures on the collection and/or handling of gums you buy from them.
- If you offer wild-collected gums, 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, and also increase their supplier power.
- Gain control over harvesting. For example, train collectors in the use of sustainable resource management methods.
- Comply with market access requirements in terms of quality control, traceability and sustainability.
- Prepare detailed product documentation on product, technical, safety and efficacy data, as well as professional samples. Increase your capacity for safety testing and monitoring to do so.
- If you offer a new gum, find out if you can test its functionality in formulations.
- See our tips for doing business on the European natural ingredients for cosmetics market.

Product competition

Apart from gums, a wide range of natural ingredients can be used to create a specific texture. These include:

- Emulsifiers, such as starches, or other gums;
- Waxes, such as beeswax or carnauba wax;
- Butters, such as shea butter;
- Hydrocolloids, such as alginates from seaweeds.
There are also various synthetic alternatives on the market. These synthetic products offer various advantages, especially in terms of properties: for example, higher efficiency, resistance to microbial degradation, and making a clear solution. However, cosmetics companies are increasingly replacing synthetic products with natural ingredients, to respond to consumer demand. See the chapter on texture from natural ingredients above for more information.

Natural gums also compete with each other. Table 2 gives a comparison of two gums with similar properties, tara gum and guar gum.

Whether your gum faces competition from products listed above depends on its properties, its origin, relevant market trends, price level, what the manufacturer plans to use the ingredient for, the positioning of his brand and company image. Once a manufacturer has included an ingredient in a cosmetic product, substitution with new ingredients becomes more difficult and expensive.

Table 2: Example of product substitution for gums, comparing tara gum and guar gum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are substitute products?</th>
<th>Tara gum</th>
<th>Guar gum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because gums are mostly used for their functional properties as emulsifiers, you can find substitute products by looking at their composition.</td>
<td>Tara gum can replace guar gum, because they have similar properties and uses in cosmetics. Guar gum also has many industrial uses, aside from use in cosmetics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| What are their competitive advantages? (price, ease/costs of substitution, legislation) | Availability of tara gum is lower. The trees are cultivated. Marketing potential for tara gum is higher than for guar gum. Tara gum comes from an exotic origin (Andes in Peru) and has an interesting community supply chain story. | Availability of guar gum is higher, but a large share is also used in the food industry. The price of guar gum is lower, although this could increase in the future. |

**Tips:**
- Determine which competing ingredients can be used in a similar way as your gum. Do a market analysis to find out what the chances of substitution are. Have a look at Table 2, which gives some considerations for product substitution by looking at two different gums.
- Differentiate your product by excellence in terms of CSR, sustainability and traceability or by providing additional services compared to your competitors.
- Investigate if and show how your gum can substitute other gums and thickeners, by comparing the properties of your gum and its alternative.
- Build and communicate a strong and attractive marketing story around your ingredient, focusing on a tradition of use or production, its origin, or how it offers benefits to local communities.

Where does your competition come from?
Where your competitors come from depends on the specific gum you produce. In your own country or region, you will also face competition from companies that want to access the same raw
materials. This may make it difficult to get sufficient raw materials.

To differentiate your gum from rivals on the market, you need to find your unique selling point. This can be:

- Producing a gum with specific properties
- Marketing potential
- Certifications

Guar gum
- Production of guar gum is concentrated in India and Pakistan. These countries account for 99% of European imports of guar gum from developing countries.

Gum arabic
- Gum arabic is wild-collected. The trees grow in countries in the gum belt in Africa, from Senegal to Somalia. Sudan dominates the global supplies of gum arabic.
- Almost 80% of European gum arabic imports originate in Sudan. The variety collected in this country (Acacia senegal) is preferred in the food industry. Gum collection in Sudan is widespread and its exporters can offer large volumes at low prices. However, European importers welcome new origins for gum arabic, to reduce risk from sourcing from the politically unstable country.
- Other countries in this region are potential suppliers as well. In 2015, Sudan’s neighbour Chad was the second largest supplier of gum arabic, followed by Nigeria and Senegal. These latter two mainly supply gum arabic from A. seyal.

Locust bean gum
- Demand for locust bean gum is quite strong. Europe used to be the main producer of locust bean gum. But, production is moving to other countries around the Mediterranean Sea where production is cheaper. Currently, Morocco has a large level of production and production is also shifting towards other countries, such as Turkey, Tunisia and the State of Palestine.

Other gums
- Brazil is the main supplier of other gums, followed by European (re-)exporters Germany and the Netherlands.
- Brazil sources from other South American countries and is a producer of pine resin from Pinus elliotti. This pine resin is also classified under other gums. It is used to produce rosin. Rosin has various industrial uses and is also used in cosmetics, for example in soaps. China and Indonesia are the other main producers of rosin.

Other seed gums
- Seed gums are produced in a wide range of countries. Europe’s main 2015 suppliers are located in Asia: India, China, the Philippines and Indonesia. These countries produce a wide range of gums and thickeners. Especially Indonesia, China and the Philippines are leading suppliers of marine-based thickeners such as carrageenan and alginates.
- Smaller suppliers outside of Europe include Chile, South Korea and Peru. Germany, France and the Netherlands are the main European sources for other seed gums.

Tips:
- Be aware that the leading suppliers can be strong competitors for your gums: for example, India for guar gum and Sudan for gum arabic.
- If you can produce gum arabic outside of Sudan, show that you can offer an alternative, more sustainable and secure source.
- If you produce locust bean gum, make use of the growing demand in Europe. Be aware that you can expect competition from Southern European countries such as Spain and
Italy, which are the main suppliers to the rest of Europe.

- Organise your supply chain to differentiate your company on the market. Make sure that your supplies are traceable and well-documented.
- Establish clear agreements on the amount and quality of gums you buy from your suppliers that match your specifications and supply contracts. Build trust between you and your suppliers and be consistent in your purchases of raw materials.
- Always be available for communication! Be open and honest in your communications and promptly answer questions and requests from your (potential) buyers.
- Also demonstrate that you are a reliable supplier in terms of quality consistency, delivery, packaging, service delivery and supply security.
- See our studies on carrageenan and alginates for more information on marine-based thickeners for the food market.
- See our study on competition for natural ingredients for cosmetics for more information.

6. Through what channels can you get botanical gums on the European market?

What does your gum do?

Although gums are used in a similar manner in cosmetics, they have slightly different properties and compositions which determine how they can be used in final products. Therefore, you need to determine the properties and composition of your gum.

For example, manufacturers look for ingredients that can stimulate the richness and creaminess of fats, without the negative sensorial attributes, for a cosmetic cream.

Information about the performance of the gum in cosmetic products can include data regarding:

- Its performance at different concentrations in the final product, in terms of stability or viscosity of the formulation;
- Whether the solution is a water in oil or oil in water emulsion; and
- The tolerance or performance at different pH levels, salinity and temperatures.

For which industry segment is your gum useful?

Once you know what your specific gum can do, you need to determine which type of products it can be used in.

Gums can potentially be used in a wide range of segments and products. Examples include:

- Skin care: creams, lotions
- Hair care: shampoo, conditioner
- Toiletries: body wash
- Decorative cosmetics: mascara, foundation

For which kind of player is your gum interesting?

Because gums are used in such a wide range of cosmetic products, both natural and conventional brands can be interesting, as well as small and large brands. However, this depends greatly on the specific gum you produce.

Main gums such as gum arabic and guar gum are used by both natural and conventional cosmetic brands. If you can ensure stable quantities and qualities, big cosmetic brands offer good opportunities.
Natural brands offer the most opportunities for new or niche gums, such as gum karaya. Niche brands can also be a good choice, as these brands are trendsetters and buy lower volumes of ingredients. These lower volume requirements can be useful if it is difficult to secure sufficient supplies.

**What is your unique selling point?**

The main opportunity for increasing the use of natural gums in cosmetics is to show that the performance of the gum in the finished product is supported by strong social and environmental information of the ingredient.

Cosmetics producers have many options in terms of ingredients that provide texture, ranging from synthetic to natural ingredients such as gums, waxes and marine hydrocolloids. You need to find out how your gum stands out from the competition. What makes it different or special? The unique selling point of gums is often based on their properties and benefits in a final cosmetic product. See the section on company competition above.

Compared to the food industry, the cosmetics sector offers better opportunities for niche and innovative gums, especially for natural and organic cosmetics.

**Tips:**

- Use properties of gums registered in COSING or those used by European suppliers and distributors in your promotional materials to make sure you use the right terminology.

- Have a look at websites such as Cosmetic Analysis, where you can find cosmetic products that use different types of gums. This can help you to determine what your specific gum is used for and by what type of cosmetic producers.

- If you bring new gums to the cosmetics market, target European importers that specialise in small or speciality ingredients.

**Through what channels can you get your botanical gums on the European market?**

See our study on market channels and segments for natural ingredients for cosmetics for an overview of market channels, segments, trends and developments.

A lot of gums are only cleaned and graded before they are exported to Europe. European importers are your most important entry point into the market. Importers then supply processors, although some importers process gums themselves.

Most value is added through processing by a small group of specialised European processors. They have complex industrial production systems to process gums, such as mixing, dissolving, filtering and pasteurisation. They also blend these gums with different ingredients to develop specific texturizing ingredients for food or cosmetic products.

Processors usually prefer to source from importers instead of sourcing directly from suppliers in the countries of origin, especially if they blend gums and other ingredients. In particular, they value the year-round supplies, short delivery times and low minimum orders that importers can provide.

If you are a small exporter or new to the European market, you can also work with an agent to represent you in the market.
Tips:
- If you cannot produce sufficient quantity and quality of gums yourself, link up with other producers.
- Trade through European importers and agents to benefit from their experience and knowledge, instead of approaching end-users directly.
- If you can produce gums with a unique selling point, target European ingredient importers that specialise in small, speciality ingredients.
- Visit and participate in trade fairs to test if the market is open to your product, get market information and find potential business partners. The most relevant trade fairs in Europe for shea butter exporters are in-cosmetics (travelling trade fair), Beyond Beauty (Paris, France) and SANA (Bologna, Italy). For organic producers, Vivaness is an interesting trade fair (Nuremberg, Germany).
- See our study on market channels and segments for thickeners in the food industry for more information.
- See our studies on finding buyers, doing business and market channels and segments for natural ingredients for cosmetics for more information.

7. What are the end-market prices for botanical gums?

For certain gums, prices are heavily influenced by the prices of substitute gums. For example, the price of locust bean gums are linked to prices for guar and tara gums, and vice versa.

In 2015, locust bean gum was priced at around €7-8 per kg, but it can range between €5 and €9. Organic locust bean gum is sold at a premium of about 10% over conventional locust bean gum.

Global prices for tara gum are formed in Peru, but this price is also influenced by prices of substitutes. To illustrate, in 2011 and 2012, a price surge in the guar gum market caused a strong growth in prices for tara gum, reaching €7 per kg in 2012. After prices of guar gum came back down, so did the prices for tara gum. Currently, tara gum is priced at around $1.50 per kg (€1.33), according to industry sources.

In July 2016, the Public Ledger reported that prices for guar gum increased by 15-20% in June/July. This is the result of a decrease in guar cultivation and a delay in the monsoon season. The growing price could in turn result in a higher price for locust bean gum and tara gum.

Developments in Sudan strongly influence global prices for gum arabic. In the past decade, political unrest in Sudan caused strong price fluctuations for gum arabic. The lowest prices for cleaned and spray-dried Senegalese gum arabic amounted to €2,300/tonne. The highest prices amounted to €7,200/tonne.

In early 2016, prices amounted to € 2,700/tonne FOB for Sudanese gum arabic from A. senegal. An outbreak of political unrest in Sudan and particularly South Sudan may cause strong price rises in the next five years.

Tips:
- See the Public Ledger for information on price developments of major gums, such as guar gum and gum arabic.
- See our studies on food uses for tara gum, locust bean gum and gum arabic for more information on prices and price developments for these gums.
Please review our market information disclaimer.