



ESO concludes project on frankincense trees

12/02/2018 Oman Observer

MUSCAT: The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) presented the results of its research project on frankincense trees, which was launched in 2010 under the title 'Sustainability of the Harvest of Frankincense'. A total of 180 trees were monitored at four sites in the Governorate of Dhofar in order to reach the ideal way to harvest a sustainable amount without harming trees. The frankincense trees are among the oldest commercial products in the world. They have been cultivated for thousands of years.

They are among the main sources of income for many people in the Sultanate. The project has been funded by two phases, including three field research on sustainable harvesting methods between April 2015 and May 2017. Among the oldest internationally traded commercial tree products in the Sultanate, where frankincense has been produced for millennia, the commodity remains an important part of local culture and a main source of income to hundreds of farmers and their families. The ESO Research and Conservation project was launched in 2010 to promote sustainable harvesting of frankincense trees, with sponsorship provided by HSBC Bank Oman.

Dr Mohsin al Amri, Project Manager and Researcher, said, "Frankincense trees have served as an important source of income and cultural symbol to people throughout the Sultanate, being used for medical and cosmetic purposes as well as food flavouring. Despite that, frankincense numbers have continued to decline as overharvesting and unsustainable practices take their toll. Research results have shown that tapping smaller trees results in insufficient seed germination and in turn reduce the produce. The impact of unsustainable harvesting methods may last up to three years and for conservation to succeed, we must continue to fill knowledge gaps, complement research findings and engage all stakeholders."

Andrew P Long, CEO of HSBC Bank Oman said, "The decline of frankincense is a challenge that requires the collaboration of all stakeholders to protect this important cultural symbol. We are confident that our partnership on this unparalleled initiative will further enhance the community's understanding on ways to protect Dhofar's prized frankincense trees."

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