



CSIR leads pivotal milestone in driving sustainable

COMMERCIALISATION OF AFRICAN GINGER

*In a landmark step for South Africa's bioeconomy, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has signed a pioneering benefit-sharing agreement (BSA) with traditional knowledge holders from Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal to commercialise African ginger (*Siphonochilus aethiopicus*). The agreement not only advances the development of a scientifically validated asthma treatment derived from this indigenous plant, but also ensures that the communities who have safeguarded its medicinal uses for generations share in the benefits. By aligning innovation with equity, environmental responsibility and national biodiversity legislation, the CSIR's initiative sets a powerful example of how science, traditional knowledge and sustainable development can work together to strengthen South Africa's knowledge-based economy.*

The [Council for Scientific and Industrial Research](#) (CSIR) has advanced South Africa's bioeconomy through the signing of a pioneering benefit-sharing agreement (BSA) with ingenious communities from Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal for the commercialisation of African ginger (*Siphonochilus aethiopicus*) technology. The BSA signing event was held on 28 November 2025 at the CSIR's Scientia Campus in Pretoria.

This milestone formalises a long-standing partnership with traditional knowledge holders and reaffirms South Africa's commitment to ethical, inclusive and sustainable bioprospecting.

African ginger has been used for generations as a potent traditional remedy for respiratory conditions, stomach ailments, malaria and asthma. Building on this rich heritage, the CSIR has conducted extensive



The flower of the African Ginger plant (*Siphonocilus aethiopicus*).

scientific research validating its therapeutic potential – particularly for asthma treatment – and has developed strong evidence supporting its pharmaceutical commercialisation.

Dr Rodney Managa, Research Group Leader: Agroprocessing at the CSIR, says, "This initiative underscores the transformative power of the bioeconomy in advancing the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#), especially [Goal Three on good health and well-being](#), while contributing to South Africa's National Development Plan 2030 and its vision of a knowledge-driven economy."

The CSIR observed legal requirements under the [National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act](#) and the Bioprospecting, Access and Benefit-Sharing Regulations to ensure that traditional knowledge holders were identified, consulted and engaged through a fair and transparent process.

"The signing of the BSA signifies more than compliance; it represents a profound commitment to equity, recognition and empowerment. By ensuring that benefits flow back to the communities that have

safeguarded the traditional knowledge of African ginger, the CSIR reinforces a model of innovation that honours heritage while fostering sustainable development," adds Dr Managa.

This achievement was supported by [the United Nations Development Programme](#) through [Global Environment Facility Six funding](#), coordinated by the [Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment's](#) (DFFE) Bioprospecting, Access and Benefit-Sharing Unit, along with the [University of Venda's Directorate of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation](#).

With patents secured and the licensing of a commercial partner nearing completion, the CSIR is poised to bring an African ginger-based product to market through an environmentally responsible supply chain. The prospective licensee will lead the manufacturing, marketing and distribution of this innovation, ensuring that commercialisation proceeds without compromising biodiversity or ecological integrity.

Article compiled from press materials provided by the CSIR. Original article [here](#).