

Towards Leading Egyptian Natural Product Industry; Can Entrepreneurs Become Key Players?

Sameh AbouZid

Department of Pharmacognosy, Faculty of Pharmacy, Beni-Suef University, Beni-Suef, Egypt.

*Natural Product Research Network for Eastern and Central Africa Research Network (NAPRECA) – Executive Secretary,
E-mail: sameh.zaid@pharm.bsu.edu.eg.*

ABSTRACT: The Egyptian pharmaceutical market is the largest in Africa, with a financial value estimated at 6.2 billion dollars. It includes more than 12,000 pharmaceutical products, with total annual sales exceeding 3.5 billion packages. It is a market supported by a strong industrial and regulatory base that includes: 179 factories for human medicines, of which 11 are accredited by international reference organizations, 150 factories for medical supplies, 4 factories for biological products, 130 factories for cosmetics, and 5 factories for raw materials. These capabilities have enabled Egypt to achieve a self-sufficiency rate of 91%, making it the highest in the Middle East and Africa in this field, with a target to reach 94% over the next three years, supported by projects sponsored by the Egyptian Drug Authority. In addition, Egypt has a great wealth of cultivated and wild medicinal and aromatic plants. The area of medicinal and aromatic plants cultivated in Egypt, reported by the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture, is about 70 to 80 thousand acres. This area represents about 0.75% of the total cultivated area in Egypt and concentrated in the Upper Egypt, which account for approximately 80.6% of the total area of medicinal and aromatic plants. There are four governorates that occupy the first rank in the production of medicinal and aromatic plants, which are the governorates of Minya (33.7%), Fayoum (19.5%), Beni-Suef (17.0%), and Assiut (10.4%). Meanwhile, the remaining areas are distributed across the Northern governorates, which account for nearly 20% of the total area cultivated with medicinal and aromatic plants. These natural resources represent excellent raw materials in the pharmaceutical industry with immense business opportunities to the herbal drugs industry. This is augmented by the worldwide growing demand for products of natural origin as represented by updated statistical data from IQVIA. At a global level, the naturals market posted growth of 16% to US\$50 billion between 2021 to MAT Q2 2023. Unlike synthetic APIs, herbal products are complex mixture of multiple constituents whose composition depends on many factors. There is a need of concerted efforts from the academia and industry to support scientific claims, develop a successful and achievable business model, and establish working clusters from different sectors. It is important to have updated and accurate statistical data to establish such business models. Moreover, entrepreneurship initiatives have to be in focus to fill the gaps and complement efforts in this high-priority field of investment.