

# TEAWAY

“Promoting tea as the engine of growth for  
the Black Sea Basin Area”

## Deliverable D.T1.4.1

### SWOT Analysis



Varna Economic Development Agency

2019

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### CHAPTER 1: SWOT ANALYSIS OF HERBS AND MEDICINAL PLANTS SECTOR IN BULGARIA

#### SWOT ANALYSIS OF HERBS AND MEDICINAL PLANTS SECTOR IN BULGARIA

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## PREFACE

This analysis has been developed in connection with the implementation of the project BSB 541 TeaWay “Promoting tea as the engine of growth for the Black Sea Basin Area”, based on study of available information in media publications and interviews, data from the Bulgarian National Statistic Institutr and Eurostat, other sources in specialized journals for tea, herbs, medicative plants and essential oils, as well as conducted interviews with owners of small companies in the country for production and packaging of herbal and medicinal tea, and essential oil, intended for use by the population in Bulgaria and for export.

One of the major obsacles in development of this analysis, was the lack of official statistics on the production and consumption of tea in the country, as far the tea is included and observed in a wider product group 07 Coffee, tea, cocoa, spices, and manufactures thereof by the National Statistical Institute in Bulgaria.

In data collection on the production of goods, the National Statistical Institute uses a template - Report on the production and sales of industrial products for the respective year. This template includes a breakdown of articles of group 10.83 Processing of tea and coffee, where the following sub-groups are indicated as classifier numbers and names:

10.83.13.00 - Green tea (not fermented), black tea (fermented) and partially fermented tea in packs of  $\leq 3$  kg

10.83.14.00 - Extracts, essences and concentrates of tea or mate and preparations made with these extracts, essences or concentrates or with tea or mate

10.83.15.00 - Herbal Infusions

However, data on the aforementioned commodity subgroups are not available for use by interested parties and researchers.

As to the official statistics on the quantities of herbs traded in the country, data are collected only at the Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Water (RIEW) of the Ministry of Environment and Waters (MOEW) and to the extent that the registered herb preparation points provide them at the end of each year. Prior to Bulgaria's entry into the European Union (EU), data on traded quantities

of herbs were collected by the customs border control. Since Bulgaria's accession to the EU in 2007, customs controls on exports to EU countries have been removed. As this was the only system for gathering information on the types and quantities of herbs exported from the country, we do not have up-to-date data today.

When considering the state of the tea production & export sector in Bulgaria in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, the focus is on tea and herbal infusions, as well as the raw material related to their production, including herbs, medicinal and aromatic plants, and essential oil, some of which - wild and / or cultivated - are used for the preparation of healing, aromatic, herbal and other assortments of tea.

In the analysis of the tea sector and related raw materials for tea production, including the big diversity of herbs, it should be clarified what we have in mind under the "herb". It refers to separate parts or whole plants, fruits and seeds thereof, in fresh or dried condition, used for the production of herbal and medicinal tea for treatment and prophylaxis, for the production of medicines, nutritional, cosmetic and technical uses.

## I. STRENGTHS

❖ One of the strengths of the herbs and medicinal plants' sector in Bulgaria is related to the favorable climatic and soil conditions in the country, which determined **availability of a large variety of wild and cultivated herbs - a raw material for tea preparation.**

The Bulgarian flora contains over 4100 species of higher plants, of which about 760-770 species (19%) are medicinal. Of these, about 250 are used extensively in official and folk medicine. 270 types of herbs are raw materials for the pharmaceutical, perfumery, cosmetic and food industries. More than 100,000 kg of dried (or frozen) herbs are collected annually from about 20 species of plants for business purposes in the country. Due to the large volumes traded, these herbs are called "multi-toned herbs" in the sector.

Some of them are good stocks in the wild: linden, rosehip, nettle, hawthorn, thorn, blackthorn, juniper, danewort thicket, dandelion, chamomile, blackberry, blueberry and more. Others are successfully cultivated in large areas: coriander, lavender, oil rose, common balm, mint,

chamomile, white thorn, and more. These species make up the bulk of herbs collected, processed and exported.

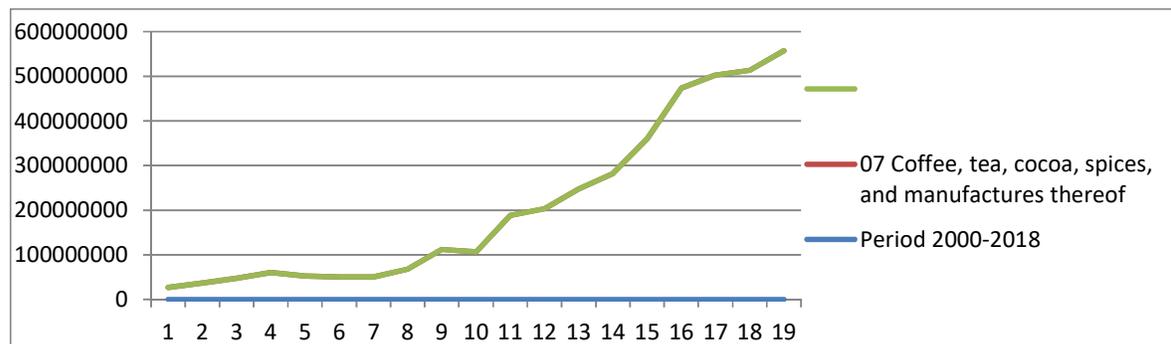
The majority of herbs (including healing plants, medicative and aromatic crops) are prepared and exported mainly in the dry state.

❖ **Bulgaria is at the first place in Europe and at one of the first places in the world by quantity of the exported herbs,** according to a publication of the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water. Each year 15,000-17,000 tons of herbs and medicinal plants are collected and processed in the country, of which about 90% are exported.

Approximately 200 types of herbs and medicinal plants are collected. They are used in the pharmaceutical, cosmetic, food processing and traditional medicine industries. However, there are 20 species of active trading.

The linden, rose-hip and nettle are the most popular Bulgarian herbs abroad. The first of these is the linden blossom, from which about 1200 tons are exported annually. Exports of rose-hip berries are about 1100 tons per year, and about 1000 tons of nettles.

❖ **Permanent positive trends in the development of the tea industry,** incl. herbal, medicative and other types of tea. These trends are driven by both the demand for raw materials in the form of dried herbs and medicinal plants outside the country, as well as the increasing volume of finished products offered in the form of tea and other products for final consumption. This is evident from the graph of coffee and tea exports in the period 2000 - 2018, where the export values increased from BGN 26,942,768.00 in 2000 to BGN 557,085,270.00 in 2018.



❖ There is a **good legislation framework in Bulgaria**, which regulates the natural resources and their use in the country. The main laws in Bulgaria that focus on protection and regulation of herbs and medicinal plants' collection, processing, storage and transportation refer to the Medicinal Plants Act, which lists 739 medicinal plants, the Biological Diversity Act, the Protected Areas Act, and the Forest Law.

In addition, there are Ordinances to the Medicinal Plants Act, which include Ordinance No. 2 of 20 January 2004 on the rules and requirements for the collection of herbs and genetic material from medicinal plants and Ordinance No. 5 of 19.07.2004 on the requirements to which herb preparation points and herb warehouses must comply.

❖ **Available financial support for tea production sector and for cultivation of herbs**, medicative plants, medicinal and aromatic crops **under the Rural Development Program (RDP) 2014-2020**. The programme's sub-measures, from which interested producers of herbs, herb processing plants, cooperatives and associations may benefit, include:

- Submeasure 6.3. "Small Business Startup Aid" with a budget of € 22 millions. Financial assistance is provided within the framework of the RDP 2014-2020 available funds, with a total amount of financial assistance per applicant not exceeding the BGN equivalent of EUR 15,000.
- Submeasure 4.2. "Investment in processing / marketing of agricultural products" with a budget of € 8 millions public funds. The measure supports projects that lead to improvement of the overall activity of the enterprises.

❖ **Other options for financing of the sector** in the country include:

- *Bulgarian Development Bank - Bridge Subsidy Financing*. Tea makers can also benefit from the „Jobs” Micro Financing Institution, which launched a new lending product to support small and micro-business - a bridge subsidy financing. This long-term financing pre-financed the approved investment costs in line with the contract with the State Fund “Agriculture”.
- Procedure “*Stimulation of the implementation of innovation in the enterprises*” under the Operational Program „Innovation and Competitiveness 2014-2020” with a budget 117,349,800.00 BGN (equal to €60,000,000.00).
- *The Leader Approach* - Local Initiative Groups (LIG) – provided support for local farmers and companies. Examples for LIG in North-East Planning Region include:

- LIG „Dolni Chiflik - Byala” – Measure „Supporting the development of innovations by start-ups“
- LIG „Devnya - Aksakovo” – Measure “Entrepreneurship support”

The support for the projects by the LIGs ranges between 48,895.75 BNG (€25,000.00) minimum value and 391,166.00 BNG (€200,000.00) maximum values.

❖ **Long-standing traditions in research related to herbs, medicinal plants and essential oils** in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian flora is one of the richest and best studied in Europe. Valuable for science as well as for anyone whose livelihoods are related to herbs are also the rich archives, various collections and herbarium stored in the specialized institutes and universities, to which everyone concerned has access. In recent years, new types of herbs have been cultivated with practical properties, including cat's step, willow herb and others.

Studies are conducted in:

#### **Institutes of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences**

- **Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research** - The Department of Plant and Fungal Diversity and Resources studies the diversity of plant species and communities, species and habitats with conservation status, medicative and aromatic plants (MAP); assesses the resources of MAPs.
- **Forest Institute** - conducts fundamental and applied research on forest ecosystems, including the study of biological resources in forests and their environmentally sound management.
- **Institute of Organic Chemistry with the Center of Phytochemistry** - among the topics on which the specialists at the Institute work are the isolation of natural compounds from Bulgarian and foreign medicinal and aromatic plants in order to characterize their chemical composition and find new biologically active substances , with potential applications in the medicine and pharmacy;

#### **Institutes within the Agricultural Academy:**

- Agrobioinstitute - Sofia;
- Institute for Plant Genetic Resources - Sadovo;
- Institute of Rose and Essential Oils - Kazanlak;

#### **In higher education institutions:**

- Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski;
- Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv;
- Thracian University - Stara Zagora;

- University of Shumen Bishop Konstantin Preslavski;
- Medical Universities - Faculties of Pharmacy;
- Agricultural University - Plovdiv, etc.

❖ **Gained experience in the development, production and control of various types and assortments of tea** with a different taste and medicative properties. Tea manufacturers are constantly increasing their production capacity to enrich and diversify their range of teas, improve quality and provide affordable prices, with the ability to meet the demands of customers, which are becoming increasingly demanding. A good infrastructure for raw material analysis and control is in place. Manufacturers are focused on improving and reducing the packaging of tea with an option for recycling for nature conservation purposes.

Increased production of herbal and fruit teas both for distribution and sale in the country and for export of certain brands of tea, like the brand Botanical, in Greece, Spain and Norway. Successful demand and export of herbs to Germany, Spain, France, Austria, Croatia and Italy.

## II. WEAKNESSES

Bulgaria is among the top five European countries for export of herbs and spices to the European Union according to the Association of Herbalists in Bulgaria. In export of herbs, Bulgaria is ahead of countries such as Poland, Hungary and Serbia. At the same time, however, in recent years the industry has accumulated problems that could lead to a collapse in production and the country to lose its competitiveness in international markets.

❖ In recent years, the **collection and export of wild herbs in the country has decreased**. However, it still ranks among the leading European countries on this indicator. In 2018, the export of wild herbs is 9,000 tonnes, and in 2017 - 12,000 tonnes. The country is extremely rich in medicinal plants, valued highly abroad, and by chance, exports for 2018 exceed 10 million euros.

Bulgarian herbs are exported to nearly 30 countries. The most sought after are nettles - roots and leaves, linden, common balm and hawthorn. The largest quantities of Bulgarian herbs are sold in Germany, France and Spain.

❖ Herbs sought abroad are also rose hips, but the production of rose hips has decreased due to clearing of the land used for pasture, for which the farmers in Bulgaria receive subsidies.

❖ People who collect herbs are also getting smaller number. Years ago, they were over 300,000. In 2018, in the active months, they were 100,000, mostly from high-unemployment areas such as Razgrad, Targovishte and Shumen. Half of them are people with low education from minority groups.

According to representatives of the Herbalists Association, "The main problem is the lack of collectors and organized courses in herbalism. After the old herbalists passed away, nobody inherits their business after them."

❖ Problems with herb pickers - There are no exact data on the number of herb-pickers in Bulgaria. By 1989, they are known to be in the 400,000's, and that even today, hundreds of thousands of families rely on the proceeds from the collection, sale and purchase of herbs. Herb collectors are usually from areas rich in medicinal plants that have no other livelihood. They take everything that nature offers them - from the primrose, in the spring - to the hips, in the fall. They know well and can harvest many herbs as long as there is a market for them. They are ready to work every year. The revenue of the collectors depends on the time and the market demand, and both are very variable. They are busy in spring and summer, but receive almost nothing for the winter. They don't even have simple equipment for collecting and carrying herbs. They do not even have a secure market and sell to whom they are called at a better price. Thus they fall prey to the many dealers in the chain. The pay is insignificant, and skills and knowledge, accumulated over years of hard work in the open air, are required. That is why the number of experienced pickers is constantly decreasing. The state aid provided through the Labor Offices in the country to those who are registered as unemployed refuses many herb pickers from treadmill work.

❖ Problems with herb preparers - There are no exact data on the quantities of herbs that pass through the herb preparation points in the country. Specialists speak of more than 17,000 tonnes a year. The largest quantities are traded in wild linden, hawthorn, rosehip, thorn, nettle. The Law on Medicinal Plants prescribes how to organize the purchase and preparation of herbs at special points, which are registered in regional inspections of environment and water. It also lays down rules for collection, drying, transport and storage. It requires herb preparers to train their pickers. However,

few are aware of the quality of the herbs and that their own profit depends on the literacy of the herb pickers. There are very few companies in Bulgaria that use high-tech equipment.

❖ **Lack of value added to raw materials from herbs** - In the country, primary processing of herbs is done, such as drying, freezing, cutting, packaging, which does not add more than 5% of value. So is the maximum profit of herbalists. Therefore, in order to increase their income, they seek to export more and more herbs and often damage the wildlife. Instead of exporting bales of herbs from the country, it is necessary to export processed products that are of much greater value on the market. This means more work, more jobs, more revenue for businesses, for the economy and for the state as a whole. If the raw material in a dried condition costs one euro, in a processed form as a final product it can cost 10-15 to 100 times more expensive. This is what companies in Bulgaria should strive for.

❖ **Lack of advertising of technological and scientific achievements in the field of herbal processing** and their use in different fields of application. The state should create conditions and promote not only the wealth of medicinal plants, but also to advertise that the country has institutes, there are science, productions and to create conditions for the development of processing capacities for medicines, food additives, cosmetics. The end product will cost a lot, but it will contain science, technology, and know-how.

❖ **Lack of statistical and other official data** for decision making and the formulation of the state policy towards the sector. Data on quantities of marketed herbs are collected only at the Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Water at the Ministry of Environment and Waters, and to the extent that the registered herb preparation points provide them at the end of each year. The collection of customs border control data on traded quantities was discontinued after Bulgaria's accession to the EU in 2007, when customs controls on exports to EU countries ceased. As this was the only system for collecting information on the types and quantities of herbs exported from the country, there are no up-to-dated data today.

Similar is the situation with the National Statistical Institute, which, as mentioned, monitors and summarizes tea data in the broader group 07 Coffee, tea, cocoa, spices, and manufactures thereof.

Apart from data from the Association of Herbalists in Bulgaria about the quantities and types of processed and exported herbs, based on information from their members, it is difficult to find any

statistical information about the sector, and from there, to adopt adequate policies for its strengthening and development.

Specifically with regard to medicinal plants (MP), the situation is similar. Only ten types of MP are collected in agrostistics - rose, lavender, peppermint, valerian, common balm, coriander, fennel, anise, white thorn and sage tea. There is no information on species such as thymus, St. John's wort, medicinal rose, mursal tea, etc., which are the main raw material for the production of medicinal tea. Aromatic and medicinal plants have been recognized as priority species and are included in the Rural Development Program 2014-2020 for support, but for most of them statistics are not collected.

The lack of information about these types of medicinal or so-called essential oils and medicinal plants, described as priorities for the RDP 2014-2020, hinders the search for raw materials by producers and traders, the planning and evaluation of the quantities demanded and offered in the country and expected production price. This does not make it easier for farmers to sell their production. It is an obstacle to planning the cultivation of MP in the country, as well as to planning measures related to medicinal plants under the Rural Development Program and other operational and financing programs.

There is interest in the agricultural producers to grow medicinal plants, but the lack of information on the opportunities for realization, markets and prices prevent them to do this.

❖ **There is no experience in product marketing.** Herbal exporting companies do not announce prices and do not negotiate in a timely manner and mainly deals with last-minute orders, which makes the market with large imbalances and price variations. This, in turn, stops the process of cultivating herbs, because in the face of uncertainty in demand and prices, no one want to commit to growing herbs, especially perennials.

❖ **There is no established herb stock exchange** that can state demand and price not only for Bulgarian but also for foreign companies, which cannot otherwise be marketed in the herb's market in Bulgaria.

❖ **Problems in the production of high quality seed and planting material** from herbs and medicinal plants. Many producers of reproducing material do not have the necessary knowledge,

experience and facilities to produce quality sowing and seedlings. A fictitious appointment of specialists is also a common practice / agronomists / as it is required by law when the registered persons do not have the necessary entity.

Illegal trade in seeds and seedlings is observed leading to:

- Unfair competition;
- Lack of authenticity - lack of varietal and sometimes species purity or reproduction of low-yielding varieties and populations;
- Poor quality of seedlings / not meeting the minimum requirements for quality recorded in Ordinance 24 of the Law on Seed and Reproducing Material (LPRM);
- Stimulation of theft of seed and vegetative material from the field.

The information on the list of producers, traders and preparers of medicinal plant seeds and seedlings is out of date. There are many people in it who have ceased their activities or have never done so. Seeds and seedlings are also produced by persons not registered with the Executive Agency for Variety Testing and Seed Control.

❖ The money collected from forest taxes is not reinvested in the industry in the form of educational courses. They sunk in the budget, and no one has any information on what funds are collected from forest taxes.

❖ There are also weaknesses with regard to state support for herbs, as it is in Poland and Serbia, for example, where there are subsidies for the sector in these two countries. State support is not enough and this is leading the country to lose more and more positions on international markets.

❖ The natural resource is exhaustible, so its use need to be regulated by several laws towards protection of wild herbs and cultivation of species that are protected for collection from the natures. Cultivation is important because it is the most successful approach to conserving wildlife habitats and overcoming the resource shortage of certain types of medicative plants. This is especially true for species that are rare and endangered, as well as for those that are used in particularly large quantities. Instead of the raw material being collected from natural habitats in the wild, it is sourced from cultivated areas. This provides a high quality and high volume raw material of herbs that better meets the requirements for the content of biologically active substances and hygienic and sanitary requirements of industries such as pharmaceuticals.

❖ **Other problems in the sector:**

- Small, non-competitive farms where medicative plants are grown.
- Low level of mechanization - drying and processing equipment.
- Insufficient knowledge of crops and cultivation technologies.
- Lack of real funding / subsidy opportunities.

It all follows: low productivity, high cost and ultimately loss of interest towards this group of crops.

### III. OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities are conditioned by the emergence of phenomena and sector's outside factors that can have a positive impact on its further development. Conditionally, these phenomena can be divided into several groups.

❖ **Factors with attitude and direct influence on the tea and herbs' sector**

There is scope for *increasing per capita consumption* of herbal and medicative teas within the country, as the prices of national production are relatively low compared to prices of imported products from EU and non-EU countries.

*Diversification into other segments of the market*, such as organic and specialty types of tea – this should be encouraged and the health benefits of tea consumption should also be used more extensively in promoting consumption in both producing and exporting of herbs and tea.

In targeting potential growth markets, *recognition of, and compliance with, food safety and quality standards* is essential for the sector further sustainable development.

Opportunities are also derived from other factors, which include *innovative developments from non-traditional players in the retail and service sectors*.

Consideration of future *strategies and appropriate enabling policies* to maintain sustainable development of the rapidly changing European and global tea economy.

❖ Another opportunities for further development of the sector of tea production and cultivation of herbs & medicative plants is through **introducing new professional education and certification programs** to encourage young people's orientation towards health care, utilizing herbs and medical plants in a variety of branches (aroma therapy, nutrition, etc.)

Introduction of *TEA SOMMELIER® Certification Program* is an option for ensuring trained and knowledgeable tea professionals, who are well versed on all aspects of tea as it affects the consumer. They should have a thorough understanding of tea and its history, processing methods and preparation. A tea sommelier should be able to interact easily with anyone on the subject of tea and make recommendations based on their needs in an approachable and easy manner.

Factors, which could contribute to the **promotion and better marketing of the sector**:

❖ Introducing **different types of sustainability awards** like:

- **Best Environmental Initiative** - This will award an initiative designed to advance environmental sustainability within the tea sector. It will recognise companies that advocates environmental benefits that may include reduced carbon emissions, waste or pollution, protecting biodiversity and ecosystems.
- **Best Social Initiative** - This will award an initiative designed to advance social sustainability within the tea sector. The initiative can be focused on social conditions such as empowering women, improving the quality of life, and increasing diversity.
- **Gold Medal Tea Competition**, focusing for example on:
  - Best Cup per Origin
  - Judged on certain characteristics like leaf make: the dry leaf style and quality as a depiction of the grade; infused leaf: brightness (where appropriate), evenness and aroma; and, liquor: flavor, appropriate mouthfeel and balance.
  - Teas will be judged by origin regardless of production type or grade
  - Any and ALL origins entered will be judged
  - It is up to the participating producer to decide what style of manufacture an entry should be (they will not be segregated).

- ❖ **Cultural Events** - Organizing and promotion of cultural and other events for the community (books & exhibition presentations, etc.) by offering tea during side events like lectures on healthy lifestyles and the benefits of herbs and medicinal plants.
  
- ❖ **Establishment of national networks of grocery / specialty stores** for brands and trade marks of organic herbs and medicinal plants - Establishment of specialty stands for tea and organic cultivated herbs in grocery stores, to be close to the customers, as well as opening specialized stores for healthy and organic food nationwide to encourage healthy lifestyle, increasing consumption.
  
- ❖ **Encourage restaurants and public catering facilities to offer tea and beverages, derived of tea and herbs.** Popularizing the positive local experience nationwide - for example, experience of Varna-based “Social Tea House”, to have both social and economic effect.
  
- ❖ **Launch of new tea & herbs trade and tourism initiatives** like:
  - Festival of Herbs, Mountains and Tourism in the village Balkanets, Troyan Municipality
  - FesTEAval Trade Exhibition in Sofia, etc.
  
- ❖ **Better legislative frameworks and support** is an important factor to increase opportunities in front of the sector’s development:
  - Introducing government *strategic and policy documents* towards support of the tea & herb production and healthy nutrition for better lifestyle.
  - Establishment of *Industry Standards* under the auspices of the government agencies dealing with tea, herbs and medicinal plants.
  - Ensuring increase in share of *financial support* to the herbs, medicinal plants and tea sector under the Agricultural Development Program during the new EU programme period 2021-2024.
  - Utilizing the *expertise of the members of the Associations* for Herbal Producers and Tea Producers by the state administration (Ministry of Water and Environment) to improve the management in herbs’ cultivation and tea production in the country.
  
- ❖ **Building public consensus for tea role and health benefits of tea:**  
Increase tea consumption by *building a consensus for tea’s role in a healthy diet*. Tea consumption, especially of green tea, could be encouraged by:
  - Registered Dietitian Nutritionists
  - Medical Community

- Fitness Community
- Specialty Tea Community

Green Tea is seen as “good for you”. However, the Coffee Still is “King” of the Morning. This needs change.

Building a *Consensus for the Health Benefits of Tea* – Strategic Solutions:

- Worked with scientific community to validate scientific research
- Conducted international symposia featuring leading international researchers
- Published proceedings in credible scientific journals
- Implemented systematic, aggressive media relations campaigns

Building *Credibility for Tea with Research-Based Symposia*

- International Scientific Symposium on Tea & Human Health: Physiological and Pharmacological Effects of *Camellia Sinensis* (Tea)
- Proceedings published in Preventive Medicine – Launched Tea & Health initiative
- The newspaper article helped create market for (green) tea
- Enhanced credibility through third-party co-sponsoring organizations & scientific leadership

Symposium *Consensus on Tea & Health Benefits*

The consensus emerging from the 2012 Tea & Human Health symposium was: “drinking at least a cup of green, black, white or oolong tea a day can contribute significantly to the promotion of public health.”

“There is now an overwhelming body of research from around the world indicating that drinking tea can enhance human health.”

*Symposium Media Coverage* - Continued media efforts in top outlets .

*Declared National Hot Tea Day* -

- Established a moment in time to talk about and promote tea by declaring the first-ever National Hot Tea Day – celebrated annually on certain date ( for example in January) in the country could give good results to increase tea consumption.
- Publicized National Hot Tea Day through a press release and targeted media outreach, highlighting health benefits and consumer survey statistics in outreach

- National Hot Tea Day accepted to Bulgarian Health Calendar 2019. Health tips and recipes
- #NationalHotTeaDay on Twitter

#### *Created News about Tea Year-Round -*

- Pique media interest year-round with angles and content that appeal to a broad range of media outlets and genres reaching younger as well as older consumers to have more results.
- Publicized the health benefits of tea using Tea Council's research and resources by leveraging key time periods throughout the year.
- Uncovered new findings from consumer survey data specific to tea, herbs and medicative plants.
- Distributed press releases.

*Tea in the Media* – examples of topics: The health benefit of tea; How to drink green tea for weight loss; 10 reasons to drink more tea; June /July/August could be announced as a National Ice Tea Month.

#### *Leveraged Content to Grow Social Presence -*

Built the Tea Council's social media presence by creating targeted and timely content to reach existing & new audiences and establish the Tea Council as the go-to source for all things tea (Titter followers, Facebook likes)

#### *Launch #PositiviTEA Social Promotion -*

Twitter/blogger promotion to create awareness of National Hot Tea Day

#### *PR Plan Overview -*

Traditional Media Relations , Social Media, Crisis Management

#### *Year-Round News Bureau -*

- ✓ National Hot Tea Month
- ✓ National Nutrition Month
- ✓ Mother's Day
- ✓ BBQ Season
- ✓ Back to School - Stress Reduction
- ✓ New Year's Resolutions/Flu Season

*Healthy Aperture Blogger Campaign*

*RD Media Network: Get Trusted RDs to Talk About Tea*

*The World's Largest Cup of Tea ( Guinness Book of World Records “Largest Cup of Tea”)*

#### **IV. THREATS**

Threats to herbs and medicinal plants are different and often combine several negative factors. Most are the result of human activity and lead to a decrease in stocks of a particular type of plant. Thus some species become rare and disappeared.

❖ The reason for herbs' extinction is often the *change in conditions or the destruction of habitats* if there are deforestation, intensive agriculture, overgrazing, and construction, artificial drainage, drying or flooding of areas. This applies to water-loving species, such as water clover, valerian, marsh, water lily. The plowing and clearing of meadows and pastures threaten species such as naked confectionery and medicinal primrose, as well as widespread species such as dandelion, rosehip, thorn, and hawthorn.

The construction of sand dunes, trampling by tourists and other similar factors also contribute to disappearance of many species of herbs and medicinal plants, which are specific to the Black Sea coastal areas.

❖ The threat also comes from *companies from Romania, Turkey, Egypt and China*, which are the biggest competitors of Bulgarian exporters as they offer large quantities of herbs and tea at lower prices.

❖ On the supply side, expected supply response to expanding demand may not be as easy as it has been in the past, given the possible constraints to the availability of suitable land for herb cultivation in the country.