This volume in the series is devoted to Africa, a continent that possesses a vast treasure of medicinal plants and has produced some exclusive materials for the world market. This book is expected to strengthen the medicinal plant sector in African countries by providing comprehensive information on medicinal and aromatic plants available to policy-makers and entrepreneurs to frame effective policies and create an environment conducive to the growth of the plant-based medicine industry, bringing economic benefit to African nations from the rising world demand for medicinal plants. It will help health organizations to improve the health of their people by using their own resources and a less expensive system of medicine, which is accepted by African society. It could also lead scientific communities to increase R&D activities in the field.
Medicinal and Aromatic Plants of the World

Volume 3

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Medicinal and Aromatic Plants of the World - Africa
Volume 3
The utilization of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) dates back to the beginnings of mankind. This fact is increasingly true in the case of Africa, a continent that is considered to be the cradle of mankind.

The rich and diverse flora of Africa has been basis/home for the evolution of African traditional medicine. This holistic discipline incorporates the use of natural plant resources (in the form of indigenous herbalism) as well as African spirituality. In the course of millennia, through the ages, the use of MAPs has also seen extreme development, so that to date, the most sophisticated medicines are already available on the African continent as well. Nonetheless, healing with medicinal plants has retained its central place in the life of the masses. Beyond traditions, this can be attributed to the fact that synthetic medicines are still simply not affordable for many.

Scientific progress has brought about a progress also in the use of traditional medicinal plants. This means that the medicinal and aromatic plants historically used by the practitioners of traditional African medicine (diviners, midwives, herbalists) are being gradually subjected to scientific investigations. Modern pharmacy wants to isolate and utilize their active principles in the form of modern preparation forms that – in turn – can be rendered accessible to consumers already on a global scale.

As a result of this briefly (schematically) described process, the MAP resources – formerly used only by the local people – must come up to cover global demands. Obviously, this is not possible without farther protection, sustainable management and, as an ultimate option, cultivation.

In view of the intensive R+D activities into African MAPs, the special literature abounds in publications. Although even the present pace of research is not considered as sufficient by many, from handbooks to clinical research papers, the number of both comprehensive and specific publications related to MAPs is imposing.

Volume 3 distinguishes itself from most available volumes on African MAPs by avoiding the semblance of completeness. Squeezing all knowledge into one volume would be absolutely impossible.
Starting out from an overview of the status of MAPs in Africa, two introductory chapters offer most comprehensive, valuable reviews of most important African MAPs, as well as their traditional uses. The chapters to follow are compilations of up-to-date information on selected characteristic African MAP species (e.g. African cherry, bird plum), geographic regions (East and North Africa, Mauritius, sub-Saharan Africa, Morocco, Nigeria, Tunisia) or MAPs growing under special ecological conditions (arid and desert zones) and in cultivation, in Nigeria. In most contributions the utilization, botanical, phytochemical as well as pharmacological properties/traditional medicinal uses, of relevant species will be discussed.

It is unhidden hope of the author’s collective that the volume will serve as a useful and updated complement to what has already been achieved in summarizing and publishing basic knowledge on African medicinal and aromatic plants.

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