

## Project Background

### Why here?

Romania is one of Europe's most important and richest biodiversity hot-spots. Large and relatively unspoilt natural or semi-natural ecosystems and traditionally managed cultural landscapes harbour high levels of biodiversity. In the Apuseni Mountains there are excellent examples of upland ecosystems rich in biodiversity, including traditionally managed mountain meadows.

### Why medicinal plants?

Following a long tradition, the rural population in Romania has collected and used a variety of wild plant and mushroom species for medicinal, cosmetic and nutritional purposes, both for subsistence and trade. Today, Southeast Europe, including Romania, is by far the most important European source region of wild-collected medicinal plants destined for the European market.

### The issue:

The destruction or conversion of habitats and an increasing demand for raw material, have increased the pressure on medicinal plant resources and their biodiversity-rich habitats. WWF is concerned about this development and together with the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine in Cluj and the Gârda de Sus community has initiated the project 'Conservation of Eastern European Medicinal Plants: "Arnica montana" in Romania'. The purpose of this project is to make this problem more widely known and to develop a model for the sustainable use and trade of medicinal plants from the wild. Such a model can have conservation benefits for habitats extending beyond the targeted species.

## Why *Arnica montana*?

- Arnica is an attractive, high-value medicinal plant with long European traditions of use for injuries and accidents like sprains, contusions, bruises, hematomas and rheumatic muscle and joint complaints
- Many Arnica products exist on the market. Romania together with Spain are the main source countries in Europe.
- Arnica is a good case-study species, as it will only continue to thrive if low intensity management of mountain meadows continues and the flowerheads are not overharvested.
- It is a generally declining threatened species in several European countries.

## Project Components

**Training and capacity building** for farmers, collectors and people with key functions in the village.



**Development of a local Resource Management and Trade Association** to negotiate Arnica management agreements between collectors and farmers and to increase bargaining power with traders.



**Development and construction of Arnica drying facilities** as an experimental centre in region.



### Research:

On Arnica ecology:  
Population biology and habitat.



Ecological sustainability of Arnica through inventory, monitoring, developing harvest methods, setting harvesting quotas ...



... and link to farm management, habitat management and tenure rights.



Participatory research on value-adding through local drying and preparation of oil and tinctures.



Supply chain & trade research to understand better the local and regional actors, demand trends and value of the trade.



On socio-economic context and community attitudes in Gârda de Sus.