

Update

May 2015 – Issue 8

Beacon Commodities



Our search for alternative botanical supplies, has taken us beyond Italy, to Morocco, where they have been producing orris root for many years. It is grown on farms throughout the country and harvested wild, deep in the Atlas mountains surrounding Marrakech.

Iris plantation with irrigation pipes coming from the river



Iris plant

Moroccan orris root

At Beacon Commodities, we have imported large quantities of orris powder into the UK and have been extremely pleased with the quality and wanted to learn more in our latest trip to Morocco. We were lucky enough to visit a farmer we know who grows orris root close to a river in the north of the country, using the river water to irrigate the crop. The Iris flowers are planted in ridged rows in February and take approximately 3 years to grow to maturity before harvesting at which point it is harvested by hand. After being cut from the plant, the root is washed and is usually peeled to speed up drying which takes up

to 1-2 years. The root is then ready for milling once the whitest roots have been selected. The milling is carried out according to our preferences but close control of this process is needed to ensure a consistent and workable quality.

Cut root is dried prior to peeling and milling



The price of orris root remains extremely volatile due to a limited supply with the extremely tough harvesting conditions in the wild. Farmed iris flowers do not produce significant quantities and therefore approaching wild collectors needs to be done sensitively so as not to inflate the market.

Moroccan orris root is currently exported throughout Europe and the US into the pharmaceutical and distilling trade both in the root and powder form. We are very pleased to have found this alternative source, offering our customers a different origin of good quality. It means with ever changing weather climates and the risks of disease, we have secured a new origin of supply, thus spreading the risk.



Orris root before being washed and cut