

PhytoArk to capitalise on Valais' natural resources

A new technology platform is set to promote alpine plants in high value-added products.

BY DINO AUCIELLO

PhytoArk, a business incubator based in Conthey (Valais), will be opening its gates in the early months of 2013. "The centre will promote its natural ingredients destined for markets in the field of cosmetics, nutraceuticals and phytopharmaceuticals," explains Karine Bourgeois, project manager.

Beauty products are a very promising market. To distinguish themselves from their competitors, companies in the sector are developing their own aromatic and medicinal plant products, such as aloe vera or edelweiss. And in the flourishing market of functional foods – or more globally the world



EDELWEISS

Alpine plants from the Valais will be used in nutraceuticals and pharma.

of nutraceuticals – PhytoArk is building on an environment conducive to the development of novel extracts. "Food is knocking on personalised medicine's door. And with the advent of food supplements, we'll be seeking for ways to prevent illnesses rather than treat them," says Karine Bourgeois.

Alpine plants from the Valais are generally used in low value-added products such as herbal teas and sweets. "They are still underestimated from a medicinal point of view," says Karine Bourgeois, who explains that PhytoArk's concept is unique in Switzerland, and rare in the rest of Europe.

Pharmalp, a company that develops wo-

PHYTOARK, SOME FIGURES

Area: 1,500 square metres for a start-up incubator, a technology platform and a private platform for industrial-scale production.

Construction cost estimate: 6.2 million Swiss francs

Shareholding: 60% City of Sion, 20% City of Conthey, 20% The Ark Foundation (Valais).

men's health products, has already joined the business incubator. Five or six start-ups specialising in exploiting natural ingredients will soon join them. PhytoArk will also open up to larger companies in the hope of establishing partnerships. ■