



dōTERRA

Bulgarian Lavender

A CO-IMPACT SOURCING STORY



Lavender Heritage in Bulgaria

In the sun-kissed fields near Bulgaria's Black Sea coast, rows of lavender stretch as far as the eye can see. Local farmers have cultivated this aromatic herb for generations, but the industry nearly faded into history during the post-communist era. Today, a revitalization is taking place, driven in part by the dedication of these farmers and the cutting-edge facilities at Esseterre.

While Bulgaria has historically boasted some of the world's premier essential oil research, development,

and production, the industry faced challenges in the post-communist era. Food crops have always dominated the country's arable land. However, after the fall of communism, government support encouraged farmers to focus on growing crops like wheat, sunflower, and corn, leaving aromatic plants like lavender and rose in the background. As a result, by 2024, essential oils like lavender and rose occupy just 1% of Bulgaria's arable land, while food crops remain the main agricultural focus.

The aromatic industry's decline in innovation inspired dōTERRA to establish the Esseterre facility in Dobrich, Bulgaria. Although Esseterre is owned by dōTERRA,



ESSETERRE QUICK FACTS

Esseterre is a dōTERRA-owned distillation facility located in Dobrich, Bulgaria, where more than 80 employees manage the production of essential oils.

The facility includes 37 stills used to distill oils like Bulgarian Lavender, Melissa, Blue Yarrow, and Savory, along with dōTERRA Frankincense and Myrrh.

A state-of-the-art laboratory with gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC/MS) equipment is located on-site, allowing timely testing and fair payment to farmers.

The land surrounding the facility supports research and trials to explore potential new crops and essential oils for future use.

Bulgarian Lavender is typically harvested from late June to late July by farmers on their land.

On average, lavender yields about 1% oil, so approximately 3 lbs (1.36 kg) of raw material produces 15 mL of Lavender essential oil.

it is a Bulgarian firm built and managed by Bulgarians. Expert managers, distillers, farmers, and engineers combine their impeccable skills and a shared commitment to positively impact their communities.

At Esseterre, the quality of essential oil can be tested from a farmer's crop very quickly. The on-site, state-of-the-art laboratory includes a gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC/MS) machine to confirm quality and a space where farmers can watch and wait while their crops are being distilled. Having this technology on-site allows dōTERRA to confirm, in a timely manner, that the plants produced high quality oil, supporting the fair and timely payment of farmers—usually the same day.

The Esseterre facility has more than 80 employees and consists of an extensive distillation operation with 37 stills to produce Bulgarian Lavender, Melissa, Blue

Yarrow, and Savoury, as well as Frankincense and Myrrh essential oils for dōTERRA. The extensive land on which the operation is set up allows for research and conducting trials that explore potential new crops and oils for the future. The on-site state-of-the-art laboratory enables the team to conduct detailed testing and research on crops and oils.

Once nearly lost to time, Bulgaria's proud lavender-growing heritage is now blossoming again, as dedicated farmers and modern innovation breathe new life into this cherished and vital crop.

"Before I started working with Esseterre in 2016, the lavender market was very unstable. After our partnership began, I could plan ahead and work calmly. A team of professionals makes sure that everything is perfect during the lavender harvest."

— Plamen, a lavender farmer





Esseterre's main distillery with twelve of thirty-eight distillation units.

Lavender typically grows on lighter, sandier soil. Even though the local arable land is different, the lavender grows with even better results in the fertile soil of Bulgaria. As the plant does not need irrigation, there is no extra watering requirement for dōTERRA's partner farmers, making it an environmentally friendly crop. It needs good sun during the summer to yield quality and quantity. Farmers obtain seedlings for their farms through propagation nurseries, using specific certified varieties of lavender. The plants are typically planted in late October. In their first year, the lavender yields little to no oil, depending on its development. However, by the second year, the plants begin to produce a higher yield. Bulgarian Lavender is

typically harvested from late June to late July by farmers on their land. While its vibrant color peaks in early summer, the plant produces higher-quality and greater amount of oil after its color begins to fade from under the summer heat. Lavender plants regrow annually and usually need replanting after 8-10 years.

After the harvest, the lavender is brought straight to Esseterre's distillation facility for processing. The lavender raw material then undergoes steam distillation to extract the essential oil, a process that takes about 1 to 1.5 hours per batch. The entire annual lavender production takes place in just 3-4 weeks, during which Esseterre employees and farmers work tirelessly around the clock.



2024 Bulgaria Firefly Project Karnobat

Social Impact

The growth of Esseterre has brought opportunity and inspiration to many people in the Dobrich region. Its presence has led to a wide range of community development initiatives, supported by local community members and the dōTERRA Healing Hands Foundation.

Since 2016, 16 social impact projects have been launched in Bulgaria with Healing Hands funding, including scholarships through a partnership with the Mothers' Care Club, and improvements to Dobrich's local schools. The foundation also supported the construction of two playgrounds for the children of Dobrich after they wrote to the mayor requesting a safe place to play. These playgrounds now serve all 80,000 residents of the city. The Step by Step program, started in 2018, was created to mentor children from vulnerable families and those who lacked parental care. It offers activities like homework help, career exploration, outdoor sports, and traditional skill workshops. This program aims to help children enter society with confidence and a sense of motivation.

The program also builds community involvement by bringing in mayors, school staff, social workers, and

volunteers to support the children. Permanent and visiting volunteers—including university students—have helped change public attitudes, fostering more empathy and understanding for these children.

In 2024, the Healing Hands Foundation also funded the Firefly project. This initiative, led by the "For The Good" Foundation, led to the renovation two pediatric hospital units in Bulgaria to create more comforting spaces for young patients. These units, including one in a hospital near the lavender-growing region, now serve over 1,800 children annually with improved lighting, colorful artwork, and a more inviting atmosphere.

As Esseterre continues to grow, its impact on the people of Dobrich only deepens. From cultivating lavender to nurturing the next generation through playgrounds, hospitals, and the Step by Step program, the partnership between farming and philanthropy is helping create a brighter future for Bulgaria's most vulnerable communities. With each step forward, this program proves that when communities come together with compassion and support, transformation is possible.

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