

**Economically Important Sage Species from Turkey: *Salvia fruticosa* Mill.  
and *S. aramiensis* Rech fil.****[Nadire Pelin BAHADIRLI\\*](#) **

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**Abstract**

Medicinal and aromatic plants have an increasing demand but this demand requires qualified material. Most of the products still obtained from nature. The mint family (Lamiaceae) contains more than 7000 species and the largest genera of the family are *Salvia*, *Scutellaria*, *Stachys*, *Plectranthus*, *Hyptis*, *Teucrium*, *Vitex*, *Thymus* and *Nepeta*. The member of the family has a value through their secondary metabolites. Essential oils are the most important secondary metabolite in many of the species in the family. The genus *Salvia* consists of 1000 species which 107 of the taxa represented in Turkey. This review focuses on two *Salvia* species from natural flora of Turkey: *Salvia fruticosa* and *Salvia aramiensis*. *Salvia fruticosa* Mill. with wide distribution is a very important commodity with medicinal and aromatic properties. Besides that, *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. occurs in a restricted area in Turkey but depending on low camphor and thujone content has a great potential to be part in trade. The importance of two species were estimated and future approaches were discussed. Especially the botany, distribution, domestication, spread, cultivation, previous studies on agricultural aspects, biological properties, breeding, molecular characterization of the species were discussed.

**Key Words:** Botany, Essential oil, *Salvia*, Sage

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**1. Introduction**

Plants have been used to cure diseases, spice in foods and bio stimulating material since ancient times. Lamiaceae family contains approximately 236 genera, and one of the most important genus is *Salvia*. The genus *Salvia* includes almost 1000 species has a great diversity and wide distributions from Far East, through Europe and across to the New World (Kintzios, 2000). *Salvia* genus represented by 100 species, 7 varieties in Turkey (Kusaksiz, 2019). There are many species exist in the genus that valuable in cosmetic, food, pharmaceutical industries

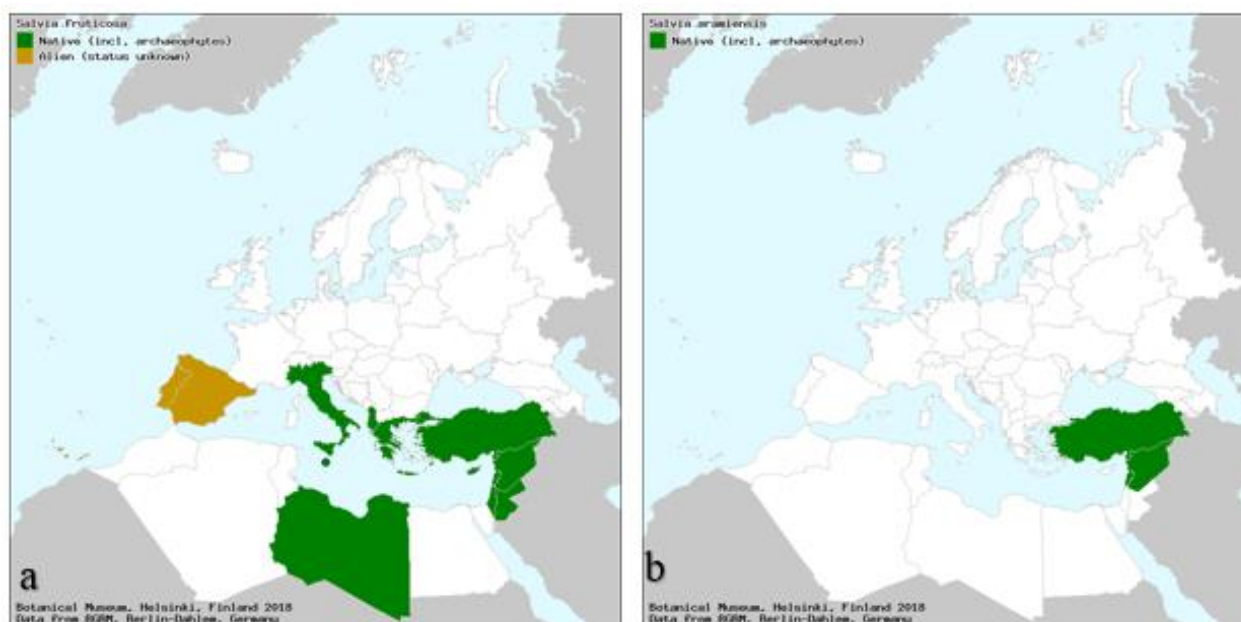
(Carović-Stanko et al., 2016). Many of the family members contain secondary metabolites, especially essential oils that efficient as antioxidants, antimicrobial, anti-Alzheimer, anticancer, even insecticidal (Pavlidou et al., 2004; Senel et al., 2010; Exarchou et al., 2015; Sarrou et al., 2016). The amount of trade for *Salvia* species difficult to find. They are mostly collected from nature and sometimes being true to a species name is not possible. In 2019 ca 2400 tonnes of *S. officinalis* were exported from Turkey while ca 500 tonnes of *S. fruticosa* were exported (TUIK, 2020). *S. aramiensis* only collected

from the flora of Hatay and consume in the local area, there are no records for this species trade. *Salvia fruticosa* Mill. (Syn: *S. triloba*) known as “Greek sage”, “Anatolian sage” and “Dalmatian sage” is a culinary herb that used for its medicinal benefits. *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil., known as “Hatay sage” naturally grows in a particular region of Turkey and used as herbal tea and incense in the local area. *Salvia aramiensis* with low thujone and camphor levels in essential oil have a great potential to be a commodity of trade similar to *S. fruticosa* (Demirci et al., 2002). In developing countries traditional medicine is still utilized while these drugs only used as alternative or complementary in industrialized countries (FAO, 2005). Developed countries such as Hong Kong, the USA, and Japan are the main markets for medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) while developing countries are the main exporters of MAPs.

Today there is very multicultural diversity for economically important plants in the sight of conservation of genetic diversity. The knowledge of genetic diversity conservation is highly improved for industrialized plants

while these information is not sufficient for MAPs. The main problem for conserving of MAPs are a leak of knowledge on population size and structure, origin, traded quantities and commodities, domestication and conservation.

In most industrialized countries, MAPs are collected from wild however with an increasing demand the collection becoming more and more problem. Many species are similar for the unconscious collectors and it is challenging to preserve these species without knowing the collection method and location (Lange, 2006). There are many organizations such as FAO, IPGRI, UPOV, ECP/GR, IUCN, WWF, EUROPAM and ISSC-MAP which are working to preserve and maintain the diversity of medicinal and aromatic plants. These organizations bring together governmental and non-governmental organizations and mostly work on in-situ conservation of endemic plants (Baydar and Telci, 2016). Because of active ingredients and new usage areas, medicinal and aromatic plants should be evaluated more carefully.



**Figure 1.** Distribution map of *Salvia fruticosa* (a-left) and *S. aramiensis* (b-right) (Anonymous, 2020)

## 2. Botany and Distribution

The genus *Salvia* with approximately 1000 species distributed in many different ecosystems (Walker et al., 2004). *Salvia fruticosa* Mill. and *Salvia aramiensis* Rech. fil. are both evergreen, perennial, semi-shrub aromatic plants. *Salvia fruticosa* native to Albania, Cyprus, East Aegean, Greece, Italy, Kriti, Lebanon-Syria, Libya, Palestine and Turkey (Hedge, 1982). *S. fruticosa* introduced into Algeria, Canary, Madeira, Morocco, Portugal and Spain (Figure 1-a). *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. is native to Turkey, Lebanon and Syria (Davis, 1982), however, there were not

any publication found from Lebanon and Syria (Figure 1-b). In Turkey *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. is widespread only in Amanos mountains, where mostly Hatay province is located (Saroglu, 2013). Amanos Mountains, which starts from north of the Mount Cassius to southwest-northeast direction reaches to Kahramanmaraş province, limits Amik Plain and the northwest side of Asi (Orontes) River (Aytac and Semenderoglu, 2014). *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. and *S. tomentosa* Mill. grows sympatrically in many areas however hybrid plants were not detected from any studies (Davis, 1982).



**Figure 2.** Leaf and flower view of *Salvia fruticosa* Mill.

Leaf and flower morphology of *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. is very similar to *S. aucheri* var. *aucheri* Bent., however, essential oil components are very distinct (Kurkcuoglu et al., 2002). In addition, in *S. aucheri* var. *aucheri* Bent. trilobed leaf forms could be seen but in *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. trilobed leaf could not form. Stems of *S. fruticosa* Mill. (Figure 2) are upright up to 1.6 m, *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. (Figure 3) plants shorter up to 1 m. The feather cover in the trunk shows a lot of variation, sparse or dense

below the body pubescent lanate or glandular, usually dense eglandular villous and short or long glandular-pubescent on the upper part of the trunk, sometimes glabrous in *S. fruticosa* Mill. while in *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. dense eglandular-tomentose and stemless glandular hairs below the trunk, top at the part gently pilose or sub-glabrous. Leaves are simple in both species, in *S. fruticosa* also triple lobed could occur. *S. fruticosa* Mill. and *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. are both entomophile and outcrossing species. *S. fruticosa* Mill. leaf



color is yellow-green and *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. leaf color is grey-green. Gall forms named “Elma (apple)” in colloquial. Gall formation could not occur in all the *S. fruticosa* populations such as Spain and Madeiran (Rivera et al., 1994). *S. fruticosa* Mill. petals pink, lilac to violet-blue, rarely white, in *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. mauve to pink. Habitats of the *S. fruticosa* Mill. are maquis shrub land to frigana, rocky slopes in altitudes 1-1000 m

and in *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. are red pine forest clearance and rocky slopes, altitudes 250-1000 m. Both of the species described as Mediterranean elements, to be specified *S. fruticosa* Mill. Mediterranean and *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. East Mediterranean element. *S. fruticosa* Mill. and *S. aramiensis* placed in the same group in Flora of Turkey (Group E) (Dogan et al., 2008).



**Figure 3.** Leaf and flower view of *Salvia aramiensis* Rech. fil.

### 3. Domestication, Spread and Cultivation

*S. fruticosa* Mill. naturalized in Malta island, Spain, Portuguese and Croatia (Greuter et al., 1986; Radosavljevic et al., 2015). *S. fruticosa* Mill. is a culinary herb that cultivated in many different countries (Delamare et al., 2007). However, *Salvia aramiensis* Rech. fil., grows only in the Amanos Mountains and trading occurs only in close provinces (Davis, 1982; Karaman et al., 2007). In Greece dry herb of *S. fruticosa* Mill. burn in a house to cleanse it (Rivera et al., 1994). Besides, *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. has a similar usage that dry herb of the plant burns in the house and believed to send away bad spirits. Threat category of *S. fruticosa* Mill. is less concern (LC) at regional, national and international levels. Threat category of *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. is as follows, for regional level vulnerable (VU),

national-level vulnerable (VU) and international level less concern (LC) (IUCN Red List Criteria 2001 in Celep et al., 2010). The number of *Salvia fruticosa* Mill. individuals are unknown however, this species is widespread and abundant in parts of its range, but is under high collection pressure and may be declining.

Most of the *S. fruticosa* Mill. and all of the *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. were collecting from wild populations. There are many steps until herbs become consumable, harvesters mostly uneducated people about species and collecting, intermediary buyer, exporter, international buyer and retailer that process the plants. The medicinal and aromatic plant industry needs high-quality material that also corrects in the name of the desired species. Sustainability of plant genetic

resources become more and more important. These conditions necessitated the cultivation of medicinal plants (Dudai and Yaniv, 2014). The domestication of a wild plant into similar climatic conditions is an easier otherwise acclimatizing process necessary.

Domestication is a process characterized by the occurrence of key mutations in morphological, phenological, or utility genes, which leads to the increased adaptation and use of the plant; however, this process followed by modern plant breeding practices has presumably narrowed the genetic diversity (Chaudhary, 2013). In 1980s domestication and selection of *S. fruticosa* Mill. were studied in Israel, but researchers stated that any wide-scale cultivation of this crop today does not exist (Putievsky and Ravid, 1984; Dudai and Yaniv, 2014). Domestication and characterization of *S. fruticosa* Mill. and *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. were studied in Hatay province, 2 genotypes of *S. fruticosa* Mill. and 3 different ecotypes of *S. aramiensis* were used. In that study highest dry herb yield found for *S. fruticosa* Mill. as 1252.74 kg/da and 642.29 kg/da for *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. In the study essential oil range was also determined, *S. fruticosa* essential oil was ranged between 1.13-3.65%, essential oil range of *S. aramiensis* was ranged between 1.13-3.06% (Ayanoglu et al., 2012). More studies should carry out both of the sage species. Cultivation for commercial purposes is rare and seeds mostly collecting from the nearest wild population for cultivation. *S. fruticosa* Mill. and *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. utilized for their secondary metabolites. Secondary metabolites show diversity even with monomorphic and same population through age. Karasou and Kokkini (1997), point out *S. fruticosa* Mill. leaf morphology varies in the different geographical areas of Greece. The northern part of the country where the transitional climate occurs; leaves were found flat and entire, while South of Greece where real Mediterranean climate occurs; total leaf

surface were decreased gradually and three-lobed, canaliculate-undulate forms appear (Karousou et. al, 2000). Murcian *S. fruticosa* Mill. populations differentiate within two main types of leaves ovate-lanceolate and ovate (Rivera et al., 1994). The higher light absorption on the leaf surface causes some morphological difference in *S. fruticosa* Mill. leaves; the number of small leaves and folding of leaf margins decreases while sparse and dense cover with hairs on the abaxial surface (Szwarcbaum, 1982).

#### 4. Genetic Resources: Essential oil yield and content, biological properties

Considering both *S. fruticosa* Mill. and *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. almost all the sources are wild. There are very limited number of varieties that developed by hybridization or selection of *S. fruticosa* Mill. In Southern Cyprus, *Salvia fruticosa* Mill. were recorded as a highly used shrub and some research was done to determine effective agricultural practices for cultivation in Agricultural Research Institute (Droushiotis and Della, 2002). *Salvia fruticosa* has been under protection in Israel National Parks and Reserve areas that collecting of plants are not permitted since 1956 (Putievsky, 2002). Crete is one of the most important genetic resources for *S. fruticosa* Mill. Evaluation of 37 different *S. fruticosa* populations from Crete resulted in geographic diversity occurs in the populations (Karousou and Kokkini, 1997). In the west of Crete *S. fruticosa*, branches are taller, leaves are big, dark green and the verticillasters of leaves are distinct, leaf blade flat and cornered. Through eastwards researchers found out that leaf forms were changed and in the east of island species with many small branches, dense leaf verticillasters, leaves are light green and small, leaf blade trilobed. Essential oils were also changed the highest essential oil content found in the east of the island with 3-4%. Essential oil content and composition also vary in the wild resources. The essential oil

content of 20 different *S. fruticosa* from native populations of Crete shows high diversity from 1.1 to 5.1%. In the west of the Crete 1.8 cineole content lower than in the east of the island (Karousou et al. 1998). The aromatic diversity of Turkey resulted that native *S. fruticosa* plants belong to the group CiCa which 1.8 cineole is dominant followed by camphor (Baser, 2002). *S. aramiensis* essential oil content found from different studies between 1-3% (Demirci et al., 2002; Karaman et al., 2007; Askun et al., 2010).

Many of the endemic and wild seeds of medicinal and aromatic plants have a germination problem (Abdollahi, 2012). *S. fruticosa* Mill. also have partial germination problem but with the addition of some priming applications germination in higher ranges are possible (Sonmez, 2019). However, the germination problem of *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. seeds are still unsolved (Bahadirli and Ayanoglu, 2019). The other gaps about the genetic resources is that diseases that threatened the field collections especially *Fusarium oxysporum* and powdery mildew. In the study *Salvia fruticosa* plants were selected from natural flora of Turkey due to the high drug herb yield and essential oil content, however, during field experiments selected plants were died because of the *Fusarium oxysporum* infection (Bayram, 1999). Furthermore, *S. fruticosa* Mill. Found so susceptible to powdery mildew that causes early defoliation and senescence (Soylu et al., 2019). More detailed studies should be done to protect genetic resources and selected material from pest and diseases. There are many studies maintained in both of the species. Determining wild populations agronomic traits and essential oil (Karoussou and Kokkini, 1997; Karoussou et al., 1998; Bayram et al., 1999; Bayram, 2001; Demirci et al., 2002; Karaman et al., 2007; Mossi et al., 2011; Schmiderer et al., 2013; Cvetkovikj et al., 2015; Karik, 2015; Uysal, 2015; Sarrou et al., 2016; Kelen and Tepe, 2017; Zgheib et al.,

2019); cultivated populations agronomic and essential oil features (Karik and Saglam, 2017; Ayanoglu et al., 2017); antifungal, antioxidant, antimicrobial and antimycobacterial (Sivropoulou et al., 1997; Sokovic et al., 2002; Askun et al., 2010; Giweli et al., 2013; Topcu et al., 2013; Sarrou et al., 2016; Ertas et al., 2017; Karik and Saglam, 2018); anti-alzheimer (Alim et al., 2018); optimal harvesting time from wild populations (Gul et al., 2002); hybridization in wild population (Radosavljevic et al., 2019); artificial hybridization (Putievsky et al., 1990; Bahadirli and Ayanoglu, 2019); genetic diversity with molecular markers (Skoula et al. 1999; Bahadirli et al., 2017). Universal molecular and morphologic diversity of *S. fruticosa*, pests and diseases, resistance to abiotic stress factors, different aspects of medicinal properties of both species exceedingly essential and requires more study.

Biological properties of *Salvia fruticosa* Mill. have been studied a lot compared to the *S. aramiensis*. An appropriate reason for this is the widespread distribution of *S. fruticosa* Mill. The main focus on both of the species was essential oil yield and composition (Schmiderer et al., 2013; Sarrou et al., 2016). On the other hand, ISO 9909:1997 report limits only the chemical composition of *S. officinalis* L. essential oil. In this report essential oil composition of *S. officinalis* L. should contain  $\alpha$ -thujone (18.0-43.0%), camphor (4.5-24.5%), 1.8 cineole (5.5-13.0%),  $\beta$ -thujone (3.0-8.5%),  $\alpha$ -humulene ( $\leq$ 12.0%),  $\alpha$ -pinene (1.0-6.5%), camphene (1.5-7.0%), limonene (0.5-3.0%), bornyl acetate ( $\leq$ 2.5%), linalool and bornyl acetate ( $\leq$ 1.0%). The main concern of *S. officinalis* L. was about thujone content of the essential oil, however according to EMA (European Medicines Agency, 2016) exposure of 3 and 7 mg/day should not take special concerns. There is a wide variation on *S. fruticosa* essential oil composition. The major compounds mostly found as 1.8 cineole and



camphor, however their rates are variable (Gul et al., 2002; Cvetkovikj et al., 2015; Kavoura et al., 2019; Zgheib et al., 2019). *S. fruticosa* Mill. is an important commodity as *S. officinalis* L. within this view *S. fruticosa* essential oil also needs ISO standard limits.

*S. aramiensis* essential oil have been studied in a few researches. In the study where an antioxidant and antimicrobial profile of *S. aramiensis* compared with *S. aucheri* var. *aucheri* and *S. pilifera*, antioxidant and antimicrobial activity of *S. aramiensis* found stronger than the other studied species (Kelen and Tepe, 2017). In the same study, major compounds of *S. aramiensis* essential oil were found as follows 1.8 cineole (46.0%),  $\beta$ -pinene (10.3%) and camphor (8.7%). The anti-Alzheimer activity of *S. aramiensis* Rech fil. root extracts were studied and the highest inhibitory activity was obtained with dichloromethane extract followed by methanol extract (Alim et al., 2018). *S. fruticosa* Mill. and *S. aramiensis* Rech fil. extracts did not show antimycobacterial activity (Askun et al., 2010). Studies reveal that the essential oil content of *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. is lower compared to the *S. fruticosa* Mill. (Demirci et al., 2002; Karaman et al., 2007). The essential oil composition of these species shows similarity yet thujone and camphor range is much lower in *S. aramiensis* Rech. fil. (Bahadirli and Ayanoglu, 2019). Karaman et al. (2007) found that major compounds of *S. aramiensis* were 1,8-sineol (%60.0),  $\beta$ -pinene (%9.0), myrcene (%3.70),  $\alpha$ -pinene (%3.40) and germacrene-D (%2.90). There are many mechanisms that affect secondary metabolites of *Salvia fruticosa* Mill. altitude is one of them. The effect of different altitudes (0-200 m; 300-500 m; 600-800 m) on *S. fruticosa* Mill. essential oil yields and components were evaluated. Essential oil yield found highest in 300-500 m as 5.1% while 1.8 cineole found highest in the same altitude. Different altitudes (Kaplan and Kocabas Oguz, 2013).

## 5. Molecular characterization

Molecular methods have been used widely for discrimination of medicinal and aromatic plants. International studies that have samples from different countries put more general perspective while national studies observed only in limited areas. Molecular markers such as RAPD, AFLP, SSR, SNP are the main methods used for identifying wild or cultivated resources. However, most of the molecular studies associate morphological characters or locations, not secondary metabolites. The main reason for that is the variability of secondary metabolites. On the other hand, it is essential to combine both methods to describe genetic resources clearly. The advantages of molecular characterization that markers are very sensitive to any genetic differentiation and also variation could detect in the early phase of the plant growth. The disadvantages of molecular characterization are the expenses and technological requirements are not developed enough in many underdeveloped countries. Considering both sides molecular characterization is open to progress and if utilizing with breeding programs could be more possible, more and accelerate progress could obtain. Some studies revealed genetic diversity of *S. fruticosa* in the natural populations (Karaca et al., 2008; Radosavljević et al., 2011; Bahadirli, 2014; Radosavljević et al., 2015). In the study from Radosavljevic et al. (2015) hybridization between *S. fruticosa* and *S. officinalis* was detected. Skoula et al. (1999), studied genetic and essential oil profile of *S. fruticosa* in three different populations in Crete. Molecular markers (RAPD) discriminate populations in to three different group but two populations find closer, similar results were obtain also when the essential oil profile was analyzed. These results showed the importance of genetic background. Secondary metabolism pathways particularly in essential oil biosynthesis are necessary for to maintain biotechnological production in a large scale.

Chatzopoulou et al. (2010) analysed selected genes that involved in the secondary metabolite synthesis in trichomes of *S. fruticosa* with cDNA library. The results of the study indicate a series of novel genes associated with secondary metabolism.

## 6. Varieties and Breeding

In Turkey only one variety of *Salvia fruticosa* 'Karik' were patented. The other record was the hybrid variety 'Newe Ya'ar 4' from Israel. Alternative strategies to enhance the dissemination of varieties among researchers and farmers are crucial for the improvement and conservation of genetic resources.

*Salvia fruticosa* and *Salvia aramiensis* species both have been utilized as herbal tea, fragrance in pharmaceutical industry and food additives, furthermore, their essential oil constituents show antioxidant, anticancer, anti-alzheimer, antimicrobial activity. Major constraints are their essential oil and biological activity. In many of biological activity research the origin of plant is unknown, in addition, agricultural studies and conservation is disregarded. Secondary metabolites of the species are unstable, correlation between their active ingredient and biological properties are crucial.

High herb yield with active ingredient, resistant to biotic and abiotic stress factors and absence of unwanted compounds with highly desired compounds mostly are the main purposes for breeding. Survey of the natural population, characterization of the resource, selection (individual or mass), propagation of the material with vegetative or generative parts, selection, cultivation and selection for desired traits until obtaining desired traits. First artificial hybridization was done between *S. fruticosa* and *S. officinalis* by Putievsky et al. (1990) to obtain the highest adaptability to flora with high yield. The hybridization range was between

*S. officinalis* × *S. fruticosa* 36% and *S. fruticosa* × *S. officinalis* 34%. Hybrids essential oils were found in the middle of parent species. Thujone content of hybrids was similar to *S. officinalis*, however, 1.8 cineole and camphor ranges were between middle of the parent species (Putievsky et al., 1990). One variety named Neve Ya'ar No:4 was developed from this hybridization study (Dudai et al., 1999). Another hybridization study was done between *S. aramiensis* and *S. fruticosa*, hybridization range between *S. aramiensis* × *S. fruticosa* found as 25.68% and *S. fruticosa* × *S. aramiensis* as 44.29%. Essential oil range between *S. aramiensis* × *S. fruticosa* 0.75-3.97%, *S. fruticosa* × *S. aramiensis* 1.04-3.84%. In the same study hybrid plants with less than 1% thujone content with higher than 60% were observed between both species (Bahadirli and Ayanoglu, 2019). Spontaneous hybrids between cultivated *S. fruticosa* and *S. officinalis* were also studied considering essential oil content and components. In the study, essential oil contents and components of the hybrids were found in the middle of the parent plants close to the *S. officinalis* parent (Karik and Saglam, 2018). Natural hybrids of *S. fruticosa* and *S. tomentosa* were propagated with cuttings and agronomic features were evaluated. In the study, essential oil contents of hybrid plants were found mostly in the middle of the parent plants however some hybrid plants essential oils were found higher than the parent plants (Evropi-Sofia, 2013). Natural hybrid plants between *S. fruticosa* and *S. officinalis* species in Croatia and Spain, in both of these study only genetic characterization, were studied (Radosavljevic et al., 2019; Rivera et al., 2019).

From the study in Hatay region artificial hybridization between *S. fruticosa* and *S. aramiensis* were done with cultivated clones from natural populations. The main purpose of that study was to obtain new plants that contain high essential oil and 1.8 cineole with



low thujone and camphor contents (Bahadirli and Ayanoglu, 2019). In other research from Israel, the study was done due to the demands of market. New variety were obtained between non-native *S. officinalis* and native *S. fruticosa* by hybridization and selection of superior genotypes. In the study the aim was, a plant with resembling *S. officinalis* in morphology and flavor additionally adaptive to intensive Israeli agricultural conditions (Dudai et al., 1999).

## 7. Conclusion

opens for essential oils in medicinal studies however reachable sources for public usage crucial. Biotechnological methods have very significant role in conservation, characterization and breeding of genetic resources, so their usage in the studies should increase. Furthermore functional genomic researches should be initiated to determine biotic and abiotic problems.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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