



# Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative

Summary of

Good Practice Guidelines  
for the  
Sustainable Use  
of  
Indigenous Wild FynBos Resources



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## **1. Introduction**

In 2000 the South African Government piloted an ambitious long term program through which a representative sample of our country's natural biodiversity are to be protected and conserved. In the Western Cape this program was implemented by C.A.P.E. (Cape Action for People and the Environment). The C.A.P.E. strategy introduces a long term vision for the conservation of biodiversity in the Cape Floral Kingdom, with an action plan composed to determine strategic priorities for conservation.

The Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative (ABI) is one of the complementary Global Environmental Fund (GEF) initiatives supported by C.A.P.E. and aimed to build methodical, Institutional and individual capacity. From this capacity conservation of ecological and socio-economical conditions must be sustained. The South African National Parks board (SanParks) was identified as the implementing agent of the Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative on behalf of C.A.P.E.

The ABI brings together conservation organisations, local authorities, government departments, conservation areas and landowners, non-government organisations and donors to work together to create a safe and healthy natural environment which will create benefits "for all for ever" in the Overberg.

The Sustainable Use principles and guidelines have been defined by the ABI as an output to be delivered upon by the Flower Valley Conservation Trust (FVCT)

FVCT is a non-profit and non-government organisation, established in 1999 through funding from Fauna and Flora International. The objectives of FVCT focus on the creation of alternative ways of conservation to enable private landowners to conserve and protect their natural fynbos veld. Through this FVCT investigates the application of conservation principles to improve the quality of existence of both man and the environment.

FVCT endeavour to be a catalyst for change, and initiate projects which promote the objectives of the organisation through involvement in the private sector, landowners and other interested parties. Within the ABI project, FVCT aim to develop the public image and market positioning of Sustainably Harvested Wild Fynbos by establishing it as a recognised and viable alternative to other forms of land-use in the area, thereby contributing to Biodiversity Conservation in the Cape Floral Kingdom. Here FVCT also aim at developing business strategies for community empowerment.

## **2. Objectives**

South Africa, in particular the Cape Floral Kingdom, exports flowers all over the world. Although some producers grow their own wildflowers and cultivars for harvesting, many wildflowers are regularly harvested from natural populations. By 1990 it was estimated that 75% of flowers were

harvested from the veld (mainly in the Western Cape and the Overberg), but more recent studies estimate that just less than 60% of this total flower market is now harvested from the wild. In recent years the export market for fresh wildflowers has become highly competitive. The demand for fynbos flower products has increased significantly in both local and foreign markets escalating the pressure on natural populations. This pressure has caused over-harvesting of certain fynbos species and has in some cases even lead to the brink of extinction of certain species.

South Africa has various laws and regulations that guide the use of natural resources (e.g. the National Environmental Management Act, and the Nature Conservation Ordinance), which are applicable for the harvesting of fynbos flowers. Additionally Cape Nature provides provincial regulations in the Western Cape with the Nature Conservation Laws Amendment Act. The Amendment Act regulates the issue of permits for flower harvesting and flower export. The practice of harvesting is also addressed however this section is restricted to the “*prohibition of picking of certain flora*” which does not include any guidelines for sustainable harvesting.

In 2004 the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund published guidelines on sustainable harvesting of endangered fynbos species. The fund identified critical gaps in the regulatory system for sustainable harvesting of fynbos. For example for most of the fynbos species the sustainable harvesting limits are still unknown or unclear. Recommendations vary from leaving one flower per square meter, to leaving at least 50% of flowers, to leaving 75% of all flowers on the plants (depending on the species).

The objective of the Flower Valley Conservation Trust under the auspices of the Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative is to initiate the development of the sustainable harvesting principles designed for the wild fynbos harvesting sector. The principles and guidelines in this document are developed to minimize and monitor the impacts of harvesting on wild fynbos species for it not to exceed its regeneration and/or productive capacity.

The objectives of these principles are:

- To ensure the conservation of biodiversity where harvesting operations occur.
- To provide a practical and pragmatic Code of Practice that achieves an appropriate balance between maximising ecological and environmental benefits whilst not presenting a significant barrier to flower farmers joining the scheme.
- To provide a system that over time can be developed and improved.
- To provide a system that encourages continual improvement in environmental performance.
- To provide a set of criteria that gives the consumer, the general public and the scientific community confidence that harvesting, if operating to these criteria, is sustainable.
- To provide a set of criteria that are simple to understand and easy to implement.

Key services provided by FVCT are:

- Monitoring program
- Mentorship program
- Market Development
- Research

The monitoring program aims to determine the impact of harvesting on available populations on sites accessible to pickers. For this purpose a data-base for CapeNature in which harvesting records and other relevant information such as Resource Base Assessments and the Vulnerability Index are being entered, is administrated by FVCT. Participating export agents, pack sheds and producers obtain internet access to extract pooled and individual data from this system. Entry levels are controlled through individual passwords to protect sensitive information.

The mentorship program supply initial support to new participants to obtain certification within the Sustainable Use project. The focus here is on implementing the guidelines and principles included in this document, coupled with training, and support with business and financial skills.

As current market forces do not accommodate higher prices for wild fynbos, suppliers of wild fynbos participating in the Sustainable Use project will only benefit financially through increased volumes. To stimulate demand for certified fynbos, market development focus on marketing the brand of certified sustainably harvested fynbos.

Research projects are being piloted by FVCT to influence and strengthen existing provincial conservation regulations on the exploitation of floral resources. This include investigating the impacts of harvesting on wild fynbos species, determining the vulnerability status of individual species, and exploring cost-effective ways for the restoration of disturbed, unproductive and alien-infested land by reintroducing fynbos.

### **3. Sustainable Harvesting Principles, criteria, standards and verifiers**

#### **3.1 Principle 1 Conservation of biodiversity**

Planned and constant measures must be taken for the protection and recuperation of biodiversity, especially for threatened and endangered species of fauna and flora.

##### **3.1.1 Criterion**

Characteristics of ecosystems and natural habitats of managed species should be maintained (Biotrade, 2007)

##### **3.1.1 Standards**

###### **Identify the boundaries & management zones of the property**

- Indicate on a map the boundaries of the property.
- Divide the property into management zones on a map.
- A member of the harvesting team must be able to identify the property boundaries and management zones in the veld & on a map.

- A member of the harvesting team e.g team leader must be able to identify their harvesting location on a map.

### **3.1.1 Verifiers**

- Clearly defined boundaries in field
- Map of farm boundaries and management zones
- Management zones labelled
- Proof of training

### **3.1.2 Criterion**

Genetic variability of flora, fauna and micro-organisms (for use and conservation) should be maintained (Biotrade, 2007)

### **3.1.2 Standards**

#### **Harvestable species assessment**

- Classify harvestable species as no-go or priority to monitor in accordance with the vulnerability index.
- Damage to non target species must be prevented e.g. driving in veld, picking of non target species, trampling, and misuse of herbicides or pesticides.
- Draw up a list of all harvestable species utilised as per floral licence occurring on the property, and add market criteria, stem length, amount of cones and flowering stage.
- Classify harvestable species according to their distribution per management zone per farm.
- Identify and permanently demarcate a representative sample of populations of harvestable species in one exclusion block per property.

### **3.1.2 Verifiers**

- Pickers must be able to identify harvestable species on the property
- Pickers must be aware of the different levels of vulnerability of harvestable species on the property
- Harvesting of no-go species is not allowed
- No damage to non target species
- Labelled map with management zones that indicate the exclusion block must be available
- Detailed record of all harvestable species that includes market criteria per zone per farm available

## **3.2 Principle 2 Sustainable use of wild fynbos resources**

The aim is to ensure that the use of a species or ecosystem is not higher than its regenerative and/or productive capacity.

### **3.2.1 Criterion**

To ensure that wild fynbos are harvested in the correct manner so as to minimize the impact of harvesting on individual populations.

### **3.2.1 Standards**

#### **Managing impact of harvesting**

- As a cautionary approach only up to 50% of the flower heads produced on a yearly basis by a plant shall be removed
- No harvesting must occur one year prior to a burn
- No harvesting seeding plants between 1 to 5 years post burn
- Correct harvesting equipment must be used e.g. pruning shears or sickles
- Harvesting equipment must be in good working condition
- Cut at an angle of 45° to the stem
- No cuts shall be made into the old growth of the stem of a plant
- Leave bearers of  $\geq 100\text{mm}$  with healthy leaves
- Leave a flower or seed bearer on re-seeding plants
- No breaks or uprooting of plants is allowed
- Pickers, Supervisors or Contractors must complete an accredited sustainable harvesting course.
- Binding twine when transported in closed container
- Pickers responsible to remove binding twine from their harvesting location
- No litter in field

#### **3.2.1 Verifiers**

- Clean cut at angle of 45° to stem
- Only up to 50% of the plant's annual flower heads removed
- No signs of uprooting or breakages on plants
- Pickers are trained or skills program in place for pickers
- No litter in field

#### **3.2.2 Criterion**

The use of natural resources should be supported by management documents.

### **3.2.2 Standards**

#### **Record Keeping**

- A daily harvesting record must be kept in the veld by the team leader capturing the following information: date; species; actual amount harvested, amount required per order, zones and name of property where harvesting occurred.
- A detailed invoice or delivery note should be written out when harvested material is transported or sold. The following information should be captured on the invoice: date of delivery; name of person delivering the product, the supplier & buyer; species name; name of property where species were harvested; amount of stems or mass per species; flora license number & person receiving the order.
- The daily harvesting record should be summarized on a monthly basis. The following information should be captured: date; species; actual amount harvested, amount required per order, zones and name of property where harvesting occurred and permit number.
- Monthly summaries of complete harvesting records must be forwarded to the data-base administrator (CapeNature or its

designated agent) in an agreed format within 14 days after the end of the month.

- A dedicated person/s must be responsible for this recording process.
- Harvesting records, delivery notes & invoices must be filed for at least three years.

### **3.2.2 Verifiers**

- Daily harvesting records available
- Invoice book or delivery notes available with all the relevant information captured
- Monthly records of harvesting available

## **3.3 Principle 3 Legal compliance with national and provincial regulations**

Compliance with relevant legislation and regulations is fundamental for the legal legitimacy of a business and its efforts to obtain market access for its products (Biotrade, 2007).

### **3.3.1 Criterion**

The business should be aware of and comply with national and provincial legislation related to the sustainable use and trade of products and services derived from biodiversity

#### **3.3.1 Standards**

##### **Flora Permits**

- The harvester must be in possession of a valid CapeNature flora license for each harvesting location and be able to produce it on request.
- All harvested species must be listed on the valid flora license.
- The harvester must understand the legislation pertaining to flora license.
- The harvester must abide by all environmental and other relevant legislation pertaining to his/her operation.

#### **3.3.1 Verifiers**

- Valid CapeNature floral license for each harvesting location
- Good understanding of the regulations of floral license

## **4. Sustainable Farm Management Plan for Landowners**

The management plan is the primary planning document that guides and integrate all farm-scale planning. A management plan is a basic tool of proactive and effective business and resource management. Every resource manager should develop a management plan that identifies management and development priorities, sets realistic targets, schedules and criteria, and defines clearly how, when and by whom these targets will be met.

The following activities must be included:

- 4.1 The Sustainable harvesting of wild fynbos (already addressed in detail in section 3 above)
- 4.2 Maintenance of infrastructure (roads, erosion control)
- 4.3 Invasive alien control and Rehabilitation of land
- 4.4 Fire prevention (including mapping of veld age), management and reaction plan, and Membership of a Fire Protection Association

## **5. Ethical Trade Principles**

Ethical Trading certification should be obtained as 'n third phase (after the implementation of the Sustainable Harvesting Principles and the Sustainable Farm Management Plan). Here a responsible attitude towards employee safety and health will be addressed, with the following aspects as verifiers:

- Valid employment contracts in place (permanent and seasonal)
- Compliance to legislation regarding the Compensation Commissioner, Unemployment Insurance, Basic Conditions of Employment, Occupational Safety and other applicable legislation
- No forced labour or illegal child labour
- A safe and healthy work environment, with trained First Aid-, Safety, and Fire Control officials
- Freedom of association, with no discrimination in terms of colour, sex, religion, politics etcetera, a culture of mutual respect and no violation of rights, and a fair disciplinary code and democratically elected worker's committee
- Continuous training

## **6. Conclusion**

This document and all practical actions arising from this must be regarded as a summary of work in progress. As more information on and understanding of the impact of harvesting become available through research projects and your own contribution through data-collection, these principles and guidelines may be modified and refined. Over time the principles and guidelines will be applied more effectively and to the benefit of both the environment and mankind.