



Exotic Cape Flora

The world has six floral kingdoms, the smallest and richest of which is found at the southern tip of Africa. The Cape Floristic Kingdom is the only one to be fully contained within one country, and has one of the highest known concentrations of species in the world.

Botanically, the Cape has been on scientists' radars since a Dutch trade group collected the Oleander-leaf *Protea* (*Protea neriifolia*) in 1597.

Some 350 years later, in 1953, the Cape's unique flowers crossed the divide between science and commercialism when a bouquet of *P. cynaroides* was sent as a gift to Queen Elizabeth in celebration of her coronation. It was the first recorded export of fresh *Protea* from South Africa to Europe.

Today South Africa is the world's leading *Protea* exporter. The European Union receives around 80% of total exports. The United Kingdom accounts for another 10%, while the remaining flowers go to Africa, the Middle East, North America, Eastern Europe and the Far East.

Despite the uniqueness of the Cape flora, the local industry faces significant, and growing, competition from other Southern Hemisphere countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Chile and Zimbabwe. They have similar climates but, in many instances, boast advanced transport logistics and post-harvest technologies that increase product quality and reduce transport costs.

Northern Hemisphere countries, such as Israel, the USA (California and Hawaii), Portugal and Spain (Madeira and Canary Islands), Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and China are also aggressive competitors. Their proximity to European markets, with the associated lower freight costs, as well as a different flowering season, gives Northern Hemisphere producers a competitive edge.

Various factors have to be addressed to ensure the ongoing competitiveness of the Cape flora export industry. These include efficient freighting, cost-effective storage and transport value chains, prolonging post-harvest quality, and the ever-present phytosanitary insect issues.

The issues facing the industry are often interlinked. For example, increased interest in sea freight of floricultural products has allowed for larger volumes to be exported at lower prices and a reduced carbon footprint. However, the extended transport period has serious cold-storage implications. A balance has to be struck between temperatures that are low enough to eliminate pests and manage the effects of water loss, ethylene and leaf yellowing, but high enough to prevent post-harvest disorders such as chilling injury and leaf blackening.

Fortunately, the constant challenges faced by producers and exporters alike promote an industry that invests in research and innovative thinking to secure its place in the international arena.



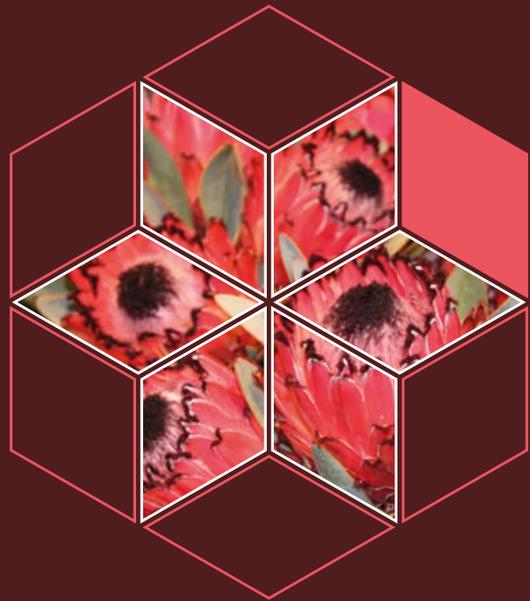
CAPE FLORA FAST FACTS

Cape flora accounts for 90% of South Africa's cut flower exports.

The value of South Africa's cut flower industry is estimated at R1 billion per year, of which exports are close to R500 million.

South African exports earn around R390 million a year on international exotic flower markets.

An estimated 20 076 014 Cape flora cut stems were exported during the 2015/2016 season. (www.capeflorasa.co.za)



The Cape Floristic Kingdom is the smallest of the six globally recognised floral kingdoms, but by far the richest. Contained within its 87 892km² is around 9 600 floral species, an estimated 70% of which do not grow anywhere else on earth.



South Africa's unique *Proteaceae* species, with their large, spectacular flowers, and the great variety of indigenous flora are high in demand in international markets.

