

Code of Practice for the Sustainable Harvesting of wild Fynbos



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Sustainable Harvesting Working Group as part of the Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative

19 September 2006

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Introduction:

This Code of Practice for the sustainable harvesting of wild fynbos flowers sets out the requirements for harvesters wishing to gain accreditation as part of the Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative (ABI) sustainable harvesting programme. It provides a comprehensive set of requirements, all of which need to be achieved before accreditation can take place. The contents of this document should be seen as a summary of work in progress. Certain aspects of the code of Practice will be updated as more information and understanding of harvesting impacts becomes available. It is part of a 'tool box' for sustainable harvesting of wild fynbos that also includes a Vulnerability Index for harvested species, a general information document, resource base assessment and an audit sheet.

Central to this COP is the recommendation that only 50% of the current year's flower heads per branch may be harvested. This is a general rule based on available knowledge of harvesting impact on fynbos species. As more detailed population biological and ecological research is undertaken on different plant groups this will be refined and adjusted accordingly.

As part of the ABI sustainable harvesting 'tool box' a Vulnerability Index of all harvested species has been developed. This provides a quick and effective summary of the vulnerability to harvesting of all species presently and potentially harvestable in the region using scores for species biological and geographical characteristics. For this COP to be implemented in other areas it will be necessary to determine the species harvested in the region and to enter their characteristics into this index (which is generic for the entire Cape Flora).

While the contents of this COP provide the basis for initial accreditation it is accepted that the majority of the management plan action (eg. Alien clearing, twine management etc) can only be monitored and evaluated after accreditation is complete. It is envisaged that there will be a close working relationship between the accredited supplier and the regulating body (certification unit) and that progressive and realistic targets will be set in order to encourage compliance with management plan objectives.

A Sustainable Harvesting Code of Practice

The Code is designed to meet a number of objectives;

- 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.

1. Promote ecosystem conservation and recovery

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

1.1 Identify the boundaries & management zones of the property.

- 1.1.1 Indicate on a map the boundaries of the property.
- 1.1.2 Divide the property into management zones on a map.
- 1.1.3 A member of the harvesting team must be able to identify the property boundaries and management zones in the veld & on a map.
- 1.1.4 A member of the harvesting team e.g team leader must be able to identify their harvesting location on a map.

1.2 Identify flora species with a high vulnerability to harvesting on the property i.e. species in the 'no-go' or 'priority to monitor' categories according to the relevant Vulnerability Index.

- 1.2.1 Draw up a list of 'no-go' & 'priority to monitor' species in each zone of the property and make it accessible to the pickers.
- 1.2.2 Pickers must be able to identify 'no-go' & 'priority to monitor' species on the property.
- 1.2.3 The harvesting of 'no-go' species is not allowed.
- 1.2.4 Damage to non-target species must be prevented e.g. driving into the veld, picking the wrong species, trampling, misuse of herbicides or pesticides.
- 1.2.5 Pickers must be able to identify alien plants on the property.

1.3 Harvestable Flora Species

- 1.3.1 Draw up a harvestable species list (common and scientific name) as per valid Flora License for the property, with market criteria for dry and fresh flora which includes stem length, amount of cones per stem and flowering stage. This must be accessible to the pickers.
- 1.3.2 Pickers must be able to identify the harvestable species on the property.

1.4 Harvestable species assessment

- 1.4.1 List the harvestable species in each management zone.
- 1.4.2 Determine the percentage cover of each harvestable species within each management zone.

1.5 Exclusion block on property.

- 1.5.1 Identify & permanently demarcate one exclusion block (50m x 50m) per property. This should be within a commonly harvested area that includes a representative sample of the harvested species.
- 1.5.2 Indicate the exclusion block on a map.

2. Legislation

Understanding & compliance with the legislation in place will aid in the sustainability of the product and add accountability and transparency to the industry.

2.1 Necessary permits from CapeNature.

- 2.1.1 The harvester must be in possession of a valid Flora License and able to produce it on request.
- 2.1.2 All harvested species must be listed on the Flora License.
- 2.1.3 The harvester must understand the legislation relevant to protected flora.
- 2.1.4 The harvester must abide by all environmental & any other relevant legislation.

3. Sustainable Harvesting

To ensure that wild flowers are harvested in the correct manner so as to minimize the impact of harvesting on the flora.

3.1 Accredited Sustainable Harvesting Training Course.

- 3.1.1 Pickers must register to join an accredited sustainable harvesting course within one year of joining the certification scheme.

3.2 Harvesting equipment.

- 3.2.1 The correct harvesting equipment must be used i.e. pruning shears & sickles.
- 3.2.2 The harvesting equipment should be in a good working condition.

3.3 Correct cutting techniques.

- 3.3.1 Make a clean cut at an angle of 45° to the stem.
- 3.3.2 Do not cut into old growth.
- 3.3.3 Leave a flower or seed bearer on re-seeding species.
- 3.3.4 No breaks or up-rooting is allowed.

3.4 Harvesting levels.

- 3.4.1 Only 50% of the current year's flower heads per branch may be harvested.
- 3.4.2 No harvesting must occur one year prior to a burn.
- 3.4.3 No harvesting should be carried out 1 to 5 years post burn for seeding species.

4. Recording system

4.1 Record keeping for flower harvesting

- 4.1.1 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.
- 4.1.2 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.
- 4.1.3 The daily harvesting record should be summarized on a monthly basis by the contractor. The following information should be captured: date; species; actual amount harvested, amount required per order, zones and name of property where harvesting occurred.
- 4.1.4 A dedicated person/s must be responsible for this recording process.
- 4.1.5 Harvesting records & invoices must be filed for at least three years.

4.2 Record keeping for wild flower biomass

- 4.2.1 Keep a record of the wild flower biomass disposal i.e. date, amount of biomass and location.

4.3 Correct procedure for the disposal of binding twine.

- 4.3.1 When twine is transported by vehicle it should be kept in a container or box.
- 4.3.2 Pickers are responsible for removing twine from the harvesting site.
- 4.3.3 Designated containers should be available for the collection of twine in the work place.
- 4.3.4 No twine should be left on the floor of the work place.
- 4.3.5 No twine should be present amongst flower waste material.

5. A Sustainable Resource Farm Management Plan for a Wild Flower Harvesting Farm *(refer to the guidelines of the Sustainable Resource Farm Management Plan).*

5.1 The Management Plan.

This must include the following sections:

- 5.1.1 The Sustainable Harvesting of Fynbos Products.
- 5.1.2 Infrastructure (road maintenance, litter control & erosion control).
- 5.1.3 Alien Vegetation Management.
- 5.1.4 Fire Management (Veld age map).

