

## The Biodiversity and Wine Initiative

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### **Why a Biodiversity & Wine Initiative?**

South Africa is the world's eighth largest producer of wine, contributing 3% of the world's total wine production. About 90 per cent of this production occurs within the Cape Floral Kingdom (CFK), the smallest and richest plant kingdom on earth. The CFK is internationally recognised as a World Heritage Site and global biodiversity hotspot - one of the richest and most threatened reservoirs of plant and animal life on earth, and critical for conservation.

A boom in wine exports during the last decade created concern within the conservation sector that some of the region's most vulnerable natural habitat (renosterveld & lowland fynbos) might be targeted for vineyard expansion. Following an initial study by the Botanical Society of South Africa and Conservation International, the conservation sector and the South African wine industry have embarked on a major initiative to incorporate biodiversity best practices into the SA wine industry.

The Biodiversity & Wine Initiative presents a great opportunity to both the wine and conservation sectors. The wine industry benefits through the marketing opportunity created, from playing a critical role in sustainable natural resource management and from conserving South Africa's natural heritage. Conservation benefits through the conservation of the CFK's threatened habitats and by pioneering biodiversity best practices with industry. Success requires the full co-operation and involvement of both sectors, and will result in a win-win outcome.

### **What is the Biodiversity & Wine Initiative?**

The goal of the Biodiversity & Wine Initiative is to minimise the further loss of threatened natural habitat, and to contribute to sustainable wine producing practices, through the adoption of biodiversity guidelines by the South African wine industry.

#### **The initiative aims to achieve:**

- No further loss of habitat in critical sites;
- A positive contribution to biodiversity conservation through setting aside natural habitat in contractual protected areas;
- Changes in farming practices to enhance the suitability of vineyards as habitat for biodiversity, and a reduction in farming practices that have negative impacts on biodiversity, both in the vineyards and in surrounding natural habitat;
- Benefits to the wine industry by using the biodiversity of the CFK, and the industry's proactive stance of implementing biodiversity guidelines, as a unique selling point to differentiate Brand South Africa.

### **How will the Biodiversity & Wine Initiative be implemented?**

The Biodiversity & Wine Initiative partners have identified six key strategies for achieving these objectives:

#### **1. Establish an enabling environment**

Working with the Biodiversity & Wine Industry partners, establish an enabling environment for the South African wine industry to embrace biodiversity. This includes defining roles and responsibilities,

securing funding, employing a project co-ordinator and extension officer and building capacity to meet the objectives.

## **2. Incorporate biodiversity guidelines into the Integrated Production of Wine**

The Initiative will work with the wine industry to incorporate effective biodiversity guidelines into the IPW environmental guidelines. The biodiversity guidelines will be practical and realistic for growers and producers to implement, with maximum conservation benefits.

## **3. Identify and enlist biodiversity & wine champions**

This involves marketing the Biodiversity & Wine Initiative through wine industry publications, and enlisting interested producers to champion the initiative. These producers will be guided in the implementation of biodiversity guidelines, and assisted in incorporating a biodiversity story in their winery experience. The role of champions is both to act as pilots for testing the implementation of the biodiversity guidelines, and to demonstrate the benefits of the Biodiversity & Wine Initiative to the industry.

## **4. Extend conservation stewardship to the wine industry**

Cape Nature Conservation's (CNC) existing Conservation Stewardship Programme will be extended to wine grape growers with endangered renosterveld and lowland fynbos on their properties. The Conservation Stewardship Programme encourages land owners to enter into formal contracts with CNC to conserve critical sites. A critical site may be a small portion of a land owner's farm. Benefits to the land owner include property rate rebates, securing the area for conservation, assistance with land management, alien plant clearing and media coverage.

## **5. Integrate biodiversity into Brand South Africa**

The Initiative aims to incorporate biodiversity into Brand South Africa, thus giving South Africa a marketing advantage in the global wine market. This is based on the unique attributes of the scenery and biodiversity of the Cape Floral Kingdom, a recently proclaimed World Heritage Site. The Initiative will build on the fact that South Africa's complex terroir, unique in the world, results in complex biodiversity and complex wines.

## **6. Develop a biodiversity wine route**

The Initiative aims to establish a biodiversity wine route where visitors are exposed to both the wine and the biodiversity experience of each participating producer. For example, guides from the local community would conduct tours of the natural vegetation, communicating the producer's story and the role of biodiversity conservation in sustainable wine production. The biodiversity wine route is an opportunity to create employment and build a new ecotourism angle for South African wine tourism.

## **Project Timeframe**

Phase 1 - initial structure and implementation - January 2004 to June 2005 - led by the conservation sector.

Phase 2 - Mainstreaming biodiversity in the industry - July 2005 to June 2006 - led by the wine industry through the existing structures, supported by conservation sector.

## **Funding**

The Initiative will be funded by international donor organisations, the wine industry, the private sector and local conservation organisations. From July 2006, the Initiative will be run and funded by the industry.

## **Partners**

The Botanical Society of South Africa

Conservation International

The Centre for Environmental Leadership in Business (CELB)

Cape Action for People and the Environment (CAPE)

National Botanical Institute (NBI)

Western Cape Nature Conservation Board (WCNCB)

South African Wine and Brandy Company (SAWB) - including WINETECH & WOSA

The Wine and Spirit Board with the Scheme for the Integrated Production of Wine (IPW)  
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)  
Centre for Biodiversity in Agroecosystems (CBA), University of Stellenbosch  
The World Conservation Union (IUCN)

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