Make a change, make a choice, make a GreenChoice.
Diversity is the magic. It is the first manifestation, the first beginning of the differentiation of a thing and of simple identity. The greater the diversity, the greater the perfection.

— Thomas Berry
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GreenChoice is an ambitious, integrated partnership created to support the development of a better way of producing and consuming the products from our natural environment.

The GreenChoice Alliance is driven by those who have witnessed the transformation of our landscape and oceans and understood the implications of the mounting food crisis and the role ecosystem health plays in food security.

Championed by Conservation South Africa (CSA), and aligned with the focal areas of our parent body, Conservation International:

GreenChoice is helping improve the way food is produced. We do this through taking an approach that integrates landscapes, water catchments and people. Tools we use include the GreenChoice ‘Living Farms’ guidelines, capacity building, curriculum development, GreenChoice monitoring and farm management systems, mapping of critical terrestrial and fresh water ecosystems within sustainable farming projects and promoting these projects to government and markets so that healthy and ethical food choices are available to all.

Promoting Better Solutions in Agriculture and Fisheries
Agriculture in South Africa has huge potential to both conserve and destroy our biodiversity, soil, water and associated livelihoods. This is because most of South Africa’s land and water is allocated to agriculture. Sadly, there is over-allocation of our water, which is worsened by competition for water between livestock, crops and energy production. Although our agricultural and biodiversity legislation is good, agricultural expansion and land degradation continue, largely due to production inefficiencies and poor capacity of producers and extension. In this scenario, it is the food insecure that are most impacted. Many of these people are rural, small-scale farmers in the same parts of SA that deliver most of our ecosystem goods and services, including carbon sequestration and water. It is GreenChoice’s aim to support sustainable small- and large-scale production through sustainable land use.

**An ecosystem** is a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and the non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.

**Biological diversity** – or biodiversity – means the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. Biodiversity – “all life on earth” – provides us with the basic goods (e.g. food, fibre, nutritional and medicinal resources) and services (e.g. clean water, waste decomposition and carbon storage) that allow humans to exist.
Working in collaboration with stakeholders throughout the value chain, GreenChoice aims to

- Support and scale up a broad range of successful sustainable agricultural production and fisheries initiatives;
- Provide technical support and information sharing;
- Identify and encourage uptake of Better Management Practices (BMPs) by producers;
- Identify and drive market mechanisms and incentives that encourage better farming and fisheries practices;
- Support research which identifies costs, barriers and incentives for sustainable production and pro-environmental behaviour throughout the value chain;
- Coordinate a communication campaign, which promotes a clear business case for the retailer and producers; and
- Assess the linkages between biodiversity conservation and the securities of food, water and climate, while identifying opportunities for intervention.

Through GreenChoice’s regular forums, workshops, face-to-face meetings, research projects, information sharing networks, associated websites and other mechanisms a platform has been created for a concerted and creative effort from government agencies, producers, scientists, retailers, suppliers and consumers to pursue broader product and land stewardship policies.

What is our message?

GreenChoice’s message is simple enough and relevant to everyone; it’s about our choice of food, the products we buy, the traceability of these, and their benefits not just for us but for the environment and local communities. It’s about working to make care for the environment inherent in all products sold in the South Africa. Also, it’s about recognising that the search for sustainable solutions is a journey and that there aren’t any perfect solutions, just increasingly better ones.

Who should join?

GreenChoice provides an inclusive platform for promoting shared aims and to this end welcomes all who work towards wise resource use throughout the supply chain.


**Stewardship** refers to the wise use, management and protection of that which has been entrusted to you. Within the context of conservation, stewardship means wisely using natural resources on your property, protecting important ecosystems, effectively managing alien invasive species and fires, and grazing or harvesting without damaging the veld.8

**Traceability** is the ability to trace and follow a food, feed, food-producing animal or substance intended to be, or expected to be incorporated into a food or feed, through all stages of production, processing and distribution.9
Sustainable Farms and Fisheries

“Farm like you’ll live forever, and live like you’ll die tomorrow”

NEW ENGLAND PROVERB

Finding sustainable food and fibre solutions to meet the demands of a population that now exceeds 7 billion is one of the key challenges of the 21st century.

A mounting food security crisis has become the focus of international attention. According to World Bank estimations the doubling of food prices over the last three years could push 100 million people in low income countries deeper into poverty. In 2009, many African countries have had their worst harvest in ten years and there has been a consistent decline in agricultural productivity for decades. Simply increasing the output of current methods of agricultural production is not the solution – agriculture already uses 55% of the habitable land on the planet and poses the single largest threat to biodiversity in SA and the world.

The increase in global demand and land degradation over the last fifty years has caused the natural resource base on which agriculture depends to decline faster than at any other time in history. To date 75% of the crop genetic base of agricultural crops has been lost, most of SA’s water is already allocated and climate change poses a further threat to ecosystem functions (e.g. nutrient and water cycling).

In South Africa – the third most biologically diverse country in the world and home to three globally significant Biodiversity Hotspots, the Cape Floristic Region, the Succulent Karoo and the Maputuland-Pondoland-Albany hotspots – a full 86% of the land area is used for crop cultivation or grazing of livestock, and less than 10% of the area is conserved.

The hidden landscape of the oceans is as scarred by man’s hand. A staggering 76% of commercial marine species are classified as fully or over-exploited – it is estimated that at the current rate we can expect a 90% depletion of all wild seafood species by 2050. A multi-faceted, site-specific approach that integrates technology, economic incentives and conservation is needed if we are to rebuild global fish stocks.

It is now clear that, if food production is to keep pace with demand and adapt for environmental change, sustainable agricultural and fisheries practices must be widely adopted. The objective is not just to preserve nature and ensure that we can feed our 7 billion population but also to maintain agricultural livelihoods, and enhance human well-being into the future.

Agriculture is the cultivation of land for the advantage of selected species including agricultural crops, livestock, tree crops and grazing lands.
Basic truths shaping the future of farming
Two trends on a collision course = the steady increase in the consumption of food and fibre products / contrasted with a steady decline in the quality and productivity of soil.11

Africa currently imports 25% of its food. At current trends, it is estimated that Africa will be able to feed less than half its population by 2015. Between 1980 and 1995 per capita food production increased 27 percent in Asia and 12 percent in Latin America. In sub-Saharan Africa, it fell 8 percent.

(Source: Committee on World Food Security)

The Challenge of Meeting Africa’s Food and Fibre Needs
Sustainable Agriculture

Sustainable agriculture practices can be in many forms, such as agroecology, organic agriculture, ecological agriculture, biological agriculture, etc. Sustainable agriculture should always refer to farming in a way that is productive and improves yield, without compromising the natural resource base. Although what constitutes good agricultural practices is often site-specific, the most widely used definitions of sustainable agriculture all include:

- Integrates natural biological cycles and controls, such as nutrient cycling, nitrogen fixation, soil regeneration, weather cycles and integrated pest management into crop production processes;
- Protects and renew soil fertility and the natural resource base;
- Optimises the use and management of on-farm resources and minimises the use of non-renewable inputs (pesticides and fertilisers) that damage human health and the environment;
- Integrates biodiversity, through maintenance and rehabilitation, to accrue benefits associated with on-farm biodiversity – such as pest control, erosion control, disease and wind buffer, water conservation and more;
- Uses local knowledge and ingenuity to preserve local crop diversity and improve local livelihoods while respecting human rights; and
- Provides an adequate and dependable farm income.

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**Six negative impacts of agriculture on the environment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate Change</td>
<td>Impacts occur as a result of greenhouse gas emissions arising from farming – particularly from the use of nitrogen fertilisers (release nitrous oxide), and livestock farming (high methane emissions).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water Pollution</td>
<td>Water is polluted by fertilisers, pesticides and silt from tilled and eroded soil.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water Shortage</td>
<td>Water is used for farming, in places where there is not enough for all, to the detriment of other users (human but also animals and plants).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toxicity</td>
<td>The action of toxic compounds used by agriculture on people animals and plants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biodiversity Loss</td>
<td>Species and habitats are lost on and off farm, and in and out of field as a result of agricultural practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil Degradation</td>
<td>Soil is lost through erosion, soil properties that are valuable to humans and other living organisms are also lost.</td>
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How did we ever get to the point where we need investigative journalists to tell us where our food comes from and nutritionists to determine the dinner menu?

MICHAEL POLLAN
THE OMNIVORE’S DILEMMA
If we understand that design leads to the manifestation of human intention, and if what we make with our hands is to be sacred and honour the earth that gives us life, then the things we make must not only rise for the ground but return to it, soil to soil, water to water, so everything that is received from the earth can be freely given back without causing harm to any living system. This is ecology.

The following projects and associated conservation organisations have proven that they can make change happen. What is now needed is the support of consumers, shops, restaurants and chefs. Listed below are just some of the choices – currently available or soon to be – for those who understand that what goes into the shopping trolley has real repercussions for the earth.

**Seafood**  
**Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI)**

To help check the rapid decline in fish stocks WWF, The Green Trust and Pick n Pay, initiated the Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI).

In 2007 the Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that 76% of global commercial fish stocks are exploited at or beyond sustainable levels. In SA, this is mostly due to overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) activities, but also destructive fishing methods, lack of scientific monitoring of fish stocks and poor management. Six of the ten most popular line-fish in South Africa are classified as collapsed. Sustainability has been based on catch limits, controls on by-catch and protection of marine habitat from destructive fishing methods. However, success has been limited and economic incentives, in the form of well-designed ‘catch shares’ or ‘Limited Access Privilege’ could help.

SASSI was established to raise awareness of the conservation status of marine species and encourage public
Bycatch: Each year commercial fishing fleets catch an estimated 16 billion pounds of unwanted marine species – this bycatch is thrown back dead or dying.

Bycatch:
Each year commercial fishing fleets catch an estimated 16 billion pounds of unwanted marine species – this bycatch is thrown back dead or dying.

Turning the tide
The wallet sized Sassi consumer guide.

pressure. The awareness raising campaign is aimed at creating informed seafood choices not just for consumers but also restaurateurs, wholesalers and retailers. SASSI is part of WWF’s Living Waters ‘Sustainable Fisheries Programme’, which includes not only SASSI – how fish are traded, but also the Responsible Fisheries Programme (RFP) – how fish are caught. Both SASSI and RFP promote self-regulation to support SA law. The Programme also trains and monitors retailers and restaurants for compliance.

To enable this, SASSI has developed a colour-coded species list. Fish are grouped into three categories: Green (healthy, relatively well managed species); Orange (legal, but there is reason for concern because of depleted populations, biological vulnerability or severe impacts of the fishery on the environment) and Red (illegal to sell in South Africa). The lists are available in wallet-size cards and in SMS form, called “FishMS”. Simply by sending the name of a fish to 079 499 8795 consumers can receive an instant response regarding the species’ status.

The green or orange status of fish is often indicated on packaging so look out for this before buying. Also, use the FishMS at restaurants and challenge the restaurant owner if vulnerable or illegal fish is being offered. Tell restaurants and retailers about the certification that SASSI offers.

Contact Janine Basson jbasson@wwf.org.za or visit www.wwf.org.za/sassi
The FishMS provides instant answers to a species' status
Wine
Biodiversity and Wine Initiative (BWI)

South Africa is the world’s eighth largest producer of wine, contributing 3.5% of the global wine production. A full 90% of South Africa’s wine is produced in the Cape Floral Kingdom.

The Biodiversity and Wine Initiative (BWI) was created to help protect the Cape Floristic Region, the smallest yet richest plant kingdom on earth. It is a collaboration between the South African wine industry and the conservation sector, which aims to minimise further loss of threatened natural habitat and to contribute to sustainable wine production.

The region is a designated biodiversity hotspot and is the only hotspot that encompasses an entire floral kingdom. Its hotspot status is clear evidence that this unique floral kingdom is being steadily eroded. The challenge is to maintain good productivity for the wine farms while conserving the area’s biodiversity, which has become an international selling point for South African wines.

A major achievement of the BWI has been to embed biodiversity guidelines into the South African wine industry and to date has 19 champions, 163 members, 17 co-op members and 8 individual members that are also wine producers. Through the BWI Members and Champions programme, as of 2010, over 204 000 ha is under better land management with over 126 000 ha of natural lands, almost 20 000 ha of which is formally conserved. Areas under conservation now exceed the total area of planted vineyards in the Western Cape.

Contact Inge Kotze ikotze@wwf.org.za and for a full list of members visit www.bwi.co.za

Biodiversity hotspots was a concept developed by British ecologist Norman Myers to address the dilemma that conservationists face: what areas are the most immediately important for conserving biodiversity? Hotspots are characterised both by exceptional levels of plant endemism and by serious levels of habitat loss. To qualify as a hotspot, a region must meet two strict criteria: it must contain at least 1,500 species of vascular plants (> 0.5 percent of the world’s total) as endemics, and it has to have lost at least 70 percent of its original habitat. Ninety percent of life on Earth lives in 34 biodiversity hotspots: the world’s most biologically rich but most threatened places.
Honey
Badger Friendly Honey

The humble honey bee plays an important role in the human diet. They provide vital pollination services to numerous crops and around a third of all the food we eat comes from plants pollinated by bees. They also form the basis of the honey industry, which in South Africa has an average annual turnover of R3.2 billion. Little wonder then that beekeepers will go to extreme lengths to protect their hives. In the past beekeepers’ efforts were hampered by the tenacious honey badger’s enthusiasm for the sticky treat. As a result a staggering number of honey badgers, a Near Threatened species, were trapped and killed.

This came to an end in 2001 when the South African Bee Industry Organisation, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, The Green Trust and The Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa collaborated to form the Badger Friendly Honey Initiative. The initiative comprises a simple intervention: raising the beehives out of the honey badgers reach, with a dramatic drop-off in losses of hives and badger lives. In addition, good management practices and marketing are used.

The initiative, which has been adopted by over 320 beekeepers countrywide, requires beekeepers to follow low-cost management practices in return for receiving a logo endorsed by the three partner conservation organisations. A 2009 study indicated that that honey badgers has stopped declining and that, through the initiative, beekeepers regarded the threat from honey badgers as only negligible compared to theft and disease.

For more information visit www.ewt.org.za
Wild Cut Flowers
Flower Valley Conservation Trust (FVCT)

Fynbos flowers are a prized South African export. Through the efforts of the Flower Valley Conservation Trust this precious resource is being simultaneously protected and promoted.

At the southern tip of Africa on the Agulhas Plain lies Flower Valley farm, a magnificent 270,000 hectare expanse of coastal lowland fynbos, containing many endangered and vulnerable vegetation types. The Flower Valley farm comprising over 3000 ha, over 20,000 ha of which is natural, was bought in 1999 with funds from Fauna and Flora International and forms the foundation of the Flower Valley Conservation Trust. It aims to conserve these valuable vegetation types while empowering the local communities to harvest wild flowers sustainably.

In 2010, it had 8 supplier members. The FVCT undertakes research, training and monitoring. A recent test of the business case for sustainable harvesting of fynbos revealed that flower harvesting can make a valuable contribution to a diversified income base in the area. As such, the FVCT has helped local communities to improve their quality of life.

Sustainable off-take levels for certain guilds of species have been established through field work by botanists. A Vulnerability Index of flowering species is in place, which has informed a Sustainable Harvesting Programme that is offered to prospective harvesters. This Programme has been developed in collaboration with the regulatory authority, CapeNature.

In addition, an auditing and certification system, with an associated marketing strategy and online monitoring system, the Fynbos Harvesting Database, are well underway. The wild harvested FVCT flowers have markets both locally and abroad that prefer ethically procured flowers. The EU now demands low chemical residues in not only food but also flowers so that soon these wild harvested flowers should have an established niche in the market place. Indeed, Fynbos bouquets picked according to the Sustainable Harvesting Programme were best sellers via the internet for Marks & Spencer in November 2011.

Contact Roger Baily rbailey@flowervalley.co.za or Lesley Richardson lesley@flowervalley.co.za and visit www.flowervalley.org.za
Wildlife Friendly Products

The impact of farming on predator populations is a largely hidden horror in our food production landscape.

Many livestock farmers use lethal trapping methods such as leg holds, traps/ginger traps/so-called soft traps, as well as poisoning and hunting by dog packs, to eradicate predators. These traps cruelly and indiscriminately kill a range of animals – target predators and non-target predators alike as well as a range of other non-target species such as tortoises, aardvarks, porcupines and antelope.

The Landmark Foundation has developed a wildlife friendly brand, Fair Game™, to incentivise farmers to use non-lethal controls and proper land use. Fair Game™ focuses on meat and animal fiber but includes other harvested and biodiversity resources. The brand focuses on several legal, social and environmental best practice standards, but most specifically the conservation of biodiversity patterns and processes of predation (and other key processes) on productive agricultural landscapes. Focussing on conservation worthy land or land that can be restored, the project includes rangelands but not feedlots or exclusively pasture-based farms as these generally have diminished biodiversity. The label, through independent certification, accredits producers and their products as wildlife friendly. The brand has two main objectives: to promote the biodiversity patterns and processes on productive landscapes, together with ethical production principles, and to promote the financial gain of those producers, where a non-negotiable minimum 10% premium must be added to produce in order to maintain the brand identity.

The brand, which is ‘owned’ by each compliant producer, is intended to empower the primary producer in the negotiation process and ensure financial reward for ecologically sound, ethical and humane production practices.

Contact Dr. Bool Smuts bool@landmarkfoundation.org.za or visit www.landmarkfoundation.org.za

Eco-labels are a proven market mechanism for the promotion of sustainable resources and ecosystems. An eco-labelled product is entitled to bear a logo that comes with a claim that the product has been produced in accordance with certain environmental standards. GreenChoice is a forum for the promotion of these and other mechanisms which promote pro-environmental behaviour. GreenChoice is not an eco-label or certification body.
All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.

EDMUND BURKE
Agriculture has done more to reshape the natural world than anything else we humans do, both its landscapes and its fauna and flora. Our eating also constitutes a relationship with dozens of other species – plants, animals and fungi – with which we have coevolved to the point where our fates are deeply intertwined.

Sustainable product options will continue to grow in response to consumer demand and environmental necessity. The following projects will be launched on the South African market in the near future.

**Sugar**

**Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative (SSI)**

Sugar demands a high price of the environment but a group of farmers in KwaZulu Natal are determined to reduce that cost through adopting a framework of good agricultural practices.

Sugar is a ubiquitous ingredient in almost all processed foods. Around the world hundreds of billions of kilograms of sugar are consumed each year. South Africa is the world’s 13th largest sugar industry and the 5th largest in terms of sugar consumption per capita – and demand will only continue to grow. Sugar cultivation and processing has significant environmental impacts on the field, farm and wider landscape. The crop fragments and replaces natural habitat and alters catchment hydrology. Cane is often planted too close to rivers, estuaries, wetlands and forests leading to habitat loss, soil erosion and, ultimately, degradation of water and terrestrial natural resources.

In response to these threats, the Mondi Wetlands Project, WWF and Noodsberg Canegrowers joined to form the Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative (SSI). Together, they have developed the Sustainable Sugarcane Farm Management System (SusFarMS) – a management and extension tool (based on economic, social and environmental better practice) to assist sugarcane growers in reducing their impact.
Citrus
Baviaanskloof Biodiversity & Citrus Initiative

Farmers on the borders of the Baviaanskloof World Heritage Site are ready to make changes to ensure the health of the region’s agricultural ecosystems.

The South African climate produces some of the world’s most prized citrus. Citrus is also one of the national focal crops post-2010. The Baviaanskloof Nature Reserve and World Heritage Site form the core of the Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve and in the reserve’s eastern gateway lays the citrus farms of the Gamtoos River Valley. The formation of the Biodiversity and Citrus Initiative in the Baviaanskloof is well timed and positioned to supply sustainably farmed citrus to SA and the world.

The export quality produce of this valley has led to significant expansion in recent years. In response to the environmental pressures this industry exerts, environmentalists at the Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve and GreenChoice developed a biodiversity strategy with the citrus industry.

The Baviaanskloof Biodiversity and Citrus Initiative provides practical and realistic guidelines for growers and producers that will maximise conservation benefits, while simultaneously identifying opportunities to address social development needs in the valley. The strategy builds on existing Globalgap and other certification schemes to support farm level conservation plan-

It was in fact the SusFarMS that informed the GreenChoice Living Farms Reference. The project has audited 260 regional farmers and is monitoring the effects of the SuSFarMS so that we may have the choice of sustainably farms sugar in the future.

Contact Vaughan Koopman
koopman@wetland.org.za

A Thirsty Diet
Food production to satisfy a person’s daily dietary needs takes about 3,000 litres of water – a little more than one litre per calorie. More than 50% of South Africa’s production is from irrigated land. South Africa’s available freshwater resources are almost fully-utilised, we are officially approaching water scarcity and more than 50% of the country’s wetlands are already lost and 60% of our rivers withdrawn, which means we do not have enough water for all our needs. Only if we act to improve water use in agriculture will we meet the acute freshwater challenges facing mankind in the next 50 years.
In the dry Sandveld region of the Western Cape farmers are trying to cultivate South Africa’s first sustainable potato crop.

Potatoes are the fourth largest global food crop, after rice, wheat and corn. In South Africa they enjoy popularity as one of the most affordable staple foods, capable of being grown on less land and in harsher climates than cereal crops and with up to 85% of the plant edible for humans.

The potato industry has a significant impact on South Africa’s biodiversity, mainly through extensive habitat transformation for production and intensive irrigation. In addition, high input costs and challenging farming conditions make maintaining an economically viable enterprise difficult for farmers in many potato producing regions. In response to these challenges, a biodiversity best practices potato project was developed in the Sandveld, Western Cape, which includes guidelines for sustainable potato production. The initiative comprised 29 members in 2010. Although this initiative comprises nearly 83 000 ha of potentially better farmed land with over 45 000 ha being natural, only 2000 ha have been secured into formally conserved areas. It is unclear what gains this project has made for farming or conservation and Potatoes SA no longer supports the extension services that are so vitally needed in these initiatives. It remains to be seen whether Sandveld Potatoes will mean Sustainable Potatoes.

For more information on potato farming in SA visit www.potatoes.co.za

Contact Phillip Dempsey
pdempsey@southernfruit.co.za

Potatoes
Sandveld Biodiversity Best Practice Potatoes Project
Tea
Right Rooibos (RR)

South Africa’s unique Rooibos tea, with its numerous scientifically proven health benefits, enjoys growing global demand but at a high environmental cost.

The Rooibos tea plant (*Aspalathus linearis*) is indigenous to South Africa and not cultivated anywhere else in the world. However, its global popularity poses an enormous threat to remaining natural vegetation on the West Coast of SA. The Rooibos industry has seen exponential growth in recent years – a staggering 742% between 1993 and 2003 – driven predominantly by global health trends. Already, its R300-million retail sales value in South Africa is outstripped by demand for the product in Germany.

Rooibos is produced mainly in the Cederberg, Bokkeveld and Sandveld areas of the Western Cape, in the Cape Floristic Region – a global biodiversity hotspot. Annually, some 60 000 ha of Rooibos are planted in the Cederberg region alone, placing significant pressure on the region’s unique biodiversity.

In response to this growth and the worrying rate of threatened habitat transformation in the Greater Cederberg Biodiversity Corridor (GCBC), CapeNature and the South African Rooibos Council (SARC) joined forces to develop and implement the Rooibos Biodiversity Initiative, now renamed the Right Rooibos (RR). Since inception, the Right Rooibos initiative has made impressive strides towards addressing environmental and socioeconomic better practice through extension efforts, research and guidelines. A Handbook for implementing Rooibos Sustainable Standards is based on the GreenChoice Living Farms Reference and other texts and standards. Many of the Right Rooibos farmers are now certified by ethical tea schemes such as Utz and Rainforest Alliance. Due to the proactive approach that Right Rooibos has taken to sustainable farming, the principles of agriculture and biodiversity conservation have been embedded within these certifications systems and adapted for Rooibos tea.
The Right Rooibos members amounted to 36 farmers in 2010 and their farms now comprise over 94 000 ha, nearly 59 000 ha of which is natural and 3 400 ha of which is secured via formal land stewardship. Right Rooibos is also one of the few initiatives that have undertaken to monitor its success through an online farm management system (aligned with the GreenChoice Farmer Field Book).

Contact Gerhard Pretorius gerhard@naturalibra.co.za and visit www.sarooibos.co.za for more information, the Handbook pdf and valuable land management tools.

Wool
National Wool Growers Association

The wool industry is working towards the production of a quality product produced from healthy sheep in a healthy environment.

South Africa is the second largest apparel (fine wool) producer in world after Australia and the industry contributes R1.1 billion to the country’s foreign exchange earnings. In response to changing global demand for wool products produced in an environmentally-sound manner, the National Wool Growers Association of South Africa is leading an initiative to conserve biodiversity within wool sheep farming enterprises. Better practice guidelines have been developed in association with GreenChoice.

The guidelines are based on three core pillars: animal well-being; sustainable resource management; and socio-economic development. The guideline criteria are also guided by several existing global certification schemes (EU standards, Globalgap, organic, Fair Trade and others). Pilot farmers (10% of the wool clip and 30% of emerging farmers) have applied these guidelines and their successes being monitored. Monitoring thereof has revealed significant gains of this approach that can be transferred across the industry.

Contact Smiley de Beer ecowool@b360.co.za

Contact
Meat

The biodiversity value of establishing an accreditation system for livestock farming cannot be underestimated. More land is used for pasture than any other single use and livestock production is the largest agricultural sector in South Africa. The total cattle (13.5 million) and sheep (28.8 million) population is almost equal to that of the human population.

The Biodiversity and Red Meat Initiative – BRI (cattle, sheep and goats)

The Succulent Karoo is the only arid Biodiversity Hotspot in the world. Leliefontein, Namaqualand is in the Three Peaks Priority area in the Kamiesberg municipality within the Succulent Karoo where the dominant land use is extensive livestock farming. The Namaqualand Granite Renosterveld in this area is at least 65% transformed due to livestock and other farming. Important wetlands in the area are also severely threatened and transformed. Increased spring temperatures in recent years have resulted in fewer farmers migrating during spring, putting additional grazing pressure of the veld. Poor infrastructure maintenance by municipalities in the areas as well as the general isolation and subsistence nature of many farmers here has resulted in poor land management and overstocking.

In response, Conservation South Africa (CSA) has facilitated the formation of the Biodiversity and Red Meat Initiative (BRI), comprising 45 members and 8 300 ha (in 2010). The main objectives of the guidelines, developed with the BRI, are decreased stocking rates, the managing and rehabilitation of the wetlands, fire and predator management as well as ecosystem based adaptation to climate change. In exchange for these commitments, CSA supports the BRI (now an independent association) with training, extension services, infrastructure and monitoring. Monitoring takes the form of long-term ecological assessments of veld condition, as well as socioeconomic Global per capita meat consumption has increased by 60% in the last 40 years - that’s 60% per person.11.
monitoring using the GreenChoice Livestock Farmer Field Book. CSA’s EcoRanger Project with 5 BRI members focuses on using handheld mobile and CyberTracker technology to test the efficacy of shepherding and Anatolian guard dogs compared to other livestock protection methods. Presently, CSA is investigating the potential of green branding their meat with a major retailer as further incentive for change.

South Africa’s world leading ostrich industry is one of the largest exporters of red meat in the country. Ninety percent of ostrich products are exported to Europe, in the form of meat, leather and feathers, generating an annual income of R1.2 billion.

In 2002, the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Programme (SKEP) and Gouritz Initiative identified the ostrich industry as being a major cause of biodiversity transformation, due to the practice of “tropparing” or flock breeding. This form of free range farming has resulted in extensive damage to the Succulent Karoo vegetation.

The industry is a critical element of the local economy, and to ensure its continued productivity environmentally sustainable farming is a necessity. The South African Ostrich Business Chamber initiated a process of farm-level management plans, which focus on biodiversity criteria and use of either intensive flock-breeding or intensive pen-breeding instead of extensive flock-breeding, as well as auditing. A major success has been the embedding of good practices into the industry: the Ostrich Business Chamber has included biodiversity into their constitution with a coordinator devoted to this biodiversity profile.

Contact Susan Botha sbotha@capenature.co.za

Integrated Biodiversity and Ostrich Industry Project (IBOIP)

**A biodiversity conservation management project in the Klein Karoo benefits both biodiversity and the ostrich industry.**

Ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from ecosystems, including the “goods and services of nature.”
SANBI Grasslands Project (beef, game & lamb)

Livestock farming is dependent on the grassland biome’s ecosystem services and when managed correctly, this can be the most compatible land use for this habitat.

South Africa’s “bread basket”, the fertile Grasslands supports a wide variety of food crops and provides grazing for most of the country’s sheep and beef production. In addition, the commercial game ranching industry has shown extraordinary growth during the past 40 years.

In view of livestock farming’s dependence on the grassland biome’s ecosystem services the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) Grasslands Programme is working closely with this sector to ensure the adoption of sustainable farming practices. Although current land use practices are threatening South Africa’s grasslands, a recent study on the impact of land uses on the biodiversity of grasslands found that under the right management regime, livestock farming and game ranching can be the most compatible land uses with grasslands biodiversity. Sustainable game production, for example, is seen as an optimal form of production for grasslands. Similarly, when cattle and sheep are sustainably grazed on the grasslands, the process benefits both the biodiversity and human health, as grass-fed beef is far healthier, with lower saturated fats than grain-fed beef. The Grasslands programme currently has various pilot projects where they are testing their Grasslands Grazing Guidelines.

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“Eating is an agricultural act.”

WENDELL BERRY

Free Range vs Factory Farm: Cattle that graze on grass only, instead of being fed corn or grain, produce beef and milk that is higher in beneficial fatty acids. Grass fed beef is lower in both total and saturated fat. These cows also require fewer antibiotics. However, almost 80% of South African beef is produced in feedlots. Remember - if it doesn’t say Free Range on the label it is not free range. The choice is yours.
References

4. WWF-SA 2010 Agriculture facts and trends, South Africa. Refresh Media, Cape Town, South Africa
9. European Community Regulation ‘General principles and requirements of food law’
17. Perkins R 2009 Measure what matters: an internal WWF discussion paper on indicators of the key environmental impacts of agriculture, WWF-US
Where do we want to be?

Ultimately, GreenChoice is not just about promoting a basket of products but ensuring that environmental issues take front and centre stage in our collective consciousness, so that South Africans can expect an environmental concern built in to the products we buy and the companies we do business with.
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