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PEARLY BEACH BEWAREA – VAN DIE LESSENAAR VAN DIE VOORSITTER, ELRINA VERSFELD

Fair Fynbos

In the midst of the Cape Floristic Region, we often take the local wild plants for granted. However, in other parts of South Africa and around the world in fact, flowers from our unique Fynbos are considered to be very special. At this time of the year, a number of plant species are already in flower: the flashy *Protea repens* (suikerbos) and *Protea compacta* (duinesuikerbos) as well as the more modest *Metasia muricata* (blombos) and *Stavia radiata* (altydbossie), while *Leucadendron coniferum* (geelbos) has spectacular cones all year round. It is wonderful to be able to share our flowers responsibly with the rest of the world. The Flower Valley Trust and the Fynsa packing shed in Stanford are supporting a sustainable Fynbos harvesting program. Several Fynbos suppliers in the Gansbaai area have been accredited to conduct ethical trade in wild Fynbos by the Wine and Agricultural Ethical Trade Association (WIETA). The association's standards ensure that the suppliers meet specific social and labour standards. The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) was formed in the 1990's to help improve the conditions of workers throughout the world. Ethical-trade is often thought to be synonymous with fair-trade, which was established in the 1980's to protect farmers from poor developing countries from low international prices of commodities. Even though these two initiatives have different approaches, they have the same aim: to help poor and otherwise disadvantaged communities participate in the international trade network. These international labels also help discerning consumers to make ethical purchasing choices. The steps to accreditation of the Fynbos suppliers, however, are not simply based on meeting these ethical criteria. They also have to observe a stringent code of practice in the sustainable harvesting of wild Fynbos. These standards ensure that Fynbos harvesting activities do not exploit or harm the natural environment. Fynbos harvesting has been an important source of income for many Overberg farmers for a long time. Responsibly done, it will benefit both people and the environment in the long term.

More information about the sustainable harvesting program can be obtained from www.flowervalley.org; other sources used www.ethicaltrade.org
Written by Susanne Fuchs.

VIR PLASING ASB OP 26 MEI 2011.