



GreenChoice aims to positively and materially change the way food and animal fibre products derived from natural resources are produced, processed and consumed.

Newsletter

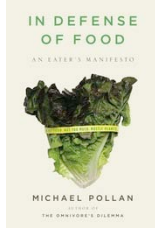
Issue No 2 - Summer 2008/9

News in Brief

It has been a busy and productive past few months and all indications are that our objectives are well aligned with the needs of both producers and the marketplace.

Page 1&2

Suggested Reading



Page 3

Featured Partner

The innovative sustainable seafood programme, Sassi, has received worldwide acclaim for its efforts to change the way South Africans think about seafood.

Page 3

Shopping IQ



Consumers need credible information to make better shopping choices.

Page 3

Tell us a story

The journey towards sustainable development is peppered with stories worth telling. Tell them to us and we'll tell those who can make a difference.

Page 3

Partner News

Just some of the highlights of the ongoing activities of our partners.

Page 4



News in brief

GreenChoice focuses on food and the implications of the choices we make about what we eat. Our work delves deeply into the environmental effects of those choices in order to put an end to agriculture and fishing practices that harm our planet and our health.

Food security, which is really food insecurity, has been on everyone's radar for a while now. The disturbing reality of falling production set against a backdrop of increased demand by a growing population for food, fibre and fuel makes the future of food very insecure indeed.

In this anxious climate GreenChoice has found an important role in providing a voice for sustainable agriculture and fisheries within the spectrum of responses to the crisis. Through our various events and platforms we have consistently promoted a message of sustainable production, processing and consumption. The support for this message both within business and industry has been excellent and provided the necessary momentum for a number of successful events.

Annual GreenChoice Forum: Way back in June we hosted our first annual forum which was attended by retailers, scientists, academics, producers, manufacturers and our conservation partners. The forum helped determine the anticipated activities for GreenChoice. These include:



The Rooibos Best Practice Guidelines were launched at an interactive event. All farmers in the area were invited to participate in the practical learning experience.

- Support and scale up a broad range of successful sustainable agricultural production and fisheries initiatives;
- Create awareness of the environmental impacts associated with the production of food, flowers and animal fibres;
- Establish mechanisms for information sharing, improved funding and technical support;
- Accelerate the adoption 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 farmer; and

- Assess the linkages between agriculture, food security, poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation and opportunities for intervention.

Rooibos Farmers Day: In October, at Donkieskraal in the Sandveld, farmers, government departments, agricultural industry players as well as conservation authorities and agencies came together to promote sustainable rooibos production. This landmark open day was aimed at raising awareness amongst Sandveld farmers, aiding in the recognition of important species and the benefits of preserving on-farm biodiversity, as well as how to implement best practice production. The event also marked the launch of the Rooibos Best Practice Industry Guidelines which follows on the heels of a similar guideline launched for the Potatoes industry in the Sandveld region in October last year. The day was hosted by Rooibos Council S.A and GreenChoice, in partnership with CapeNature.

Flower Valley Field Trip: In the first of a number of planned lesson sharing activities GreenChoice hosted business and biodiversity project leaders on a learning exchange to the Agulhas Plain. The trip was made possible through the excellent planning and support provided by Flower Valley. The two day event was attended by conservationist scientists, local government and producers. The aim was to find areas of commonality in sustainable production and understand landowner stewardship interests.

Certification for Sustainable Rooibos: The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has committed to funding support for a certification procedure for Rooibos within the GreenChoice partnership.

Working for well managed farms

Farm like you'll live forever, and live like you'll die tomorrow.

— *New England proverb*

WWF Sustainable Farm Guidelines:

We are actively supporting this WWF and Sanlam initiative, aimed at developing better production practices and ultimately standards for well managed farms. It is intended that - by standardising national sustainable agriculture guidelines - we develop a powerful market and policy instrument. Moreover, well managed farms will ensure long term productivity and help check the diminishing quality of the our soils. GreenChoice co-hosted a multi-stakeholder forum at which the draft guidelines were interrogated. The adapted framework will be circulated for further comment in early 2009.

Natural and Organics Festival:

The WWF Heroes campaign created an impressive stand for the Natural and Organics expo in Cape Town. GreenChoice partnered with WWF to promote messaging around buying better, buying less and making wise food choices.

Food Security Working Group:

We have been invited to join a working group for ensuring food security in South Africa. In February a high-level workshop will provide an opportunity for government, business and civil society to formulate solutions for securing our future food supply. It is convened by the Directorate of Food Security in the National Department of Agriculture, Development Bank of Southern Africa, South African Human Rights Commission, National Business Initiative, Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit, GreenChoice, and University of Cape Town.

Nedbank & Africa Geographic

Reader's Evening: GreenChoice was invited to convene a panel discussion and public debate, in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town. In Durban the discussion focused on sustainable seafood choices. In Johannesburg and Cape Town we asked leading retailers to present their position on sustainable procurement. The evenings were extremely well attended and the topic stimulated lively debate. The input from the audience helped provide a qualitative view of the food issues upper most in the minds of SA citizens.

Kirstenbosch Sunset Concerts:

GreenChoice kicked off the Biodiversity Exhibits at the Old Mutual Kirstenbosch Summer Sunset Concerts with a stand at the first concert of the season. After the event Kirstenbosch Estate Manager, Augustine Morkel, commented: "GreenChoice made a significant impact – taking conservation value communication to a whole new level." Our thanks to the WWF marketing team who employed a team of students to work the crowd, handing out Sassi cards, Biodiversity in Wine lists and pocket sized better shopping guides.

Business and Biodiversity Audit:

GreenChoice has initiated a Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund study to ascertain the conservation gains made by business and biodiversity initiatives in wine, rooibos, potatoes, fynbos flowers. The study will also provide important recommendations for ensuring the sustainability of these projects and future investments.



"... there's a direct connection between the health of the soil, the health of the plants, the health of the animals, and you as eater."

Michael Pollan

FEATURED PARTNER

Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (Sassi)

With the aim of checking the rapid decline in fish stocks WWF, the Nedbank Green Trust and Pick n Pay, initiated the Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (Sassi).

South African waters host some of the most diverse marine ecosystems in the world. However, here as elsewhere, there is growing scientific consensus that our oceans are in crisis. Six of the ten most popular linefish in South Africa are classified as collapsed.

Increased demand for seafood and technological advances in finding and catching fish have literally stripped our oceans bare.

Sassi was established to raise awareness of the conservation status of marine species and encourage public pressure to reverse this situation. The awareness raising campaign is aimed at creating informed seafood choices not just for consumers but also restaurateurs, wholesalers and retailers.

To encourage voluntary compliance with laws that protect endangered fish species 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



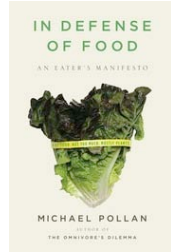
Instant answers make for informed choices

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. For a full list of participating restaurants visit: www.wwf-sassi.co.za

Contact Timony Siebert:
tsiebert@wwf.org.za

Food for thought - some recommended reading.

GreenChoice has compiled a list of some of the books that currently urge us to rethink our approach to the food economy.



Food is one of life's most sensual pleasures as well as a source of endless fascination. Celebrity chefs like Jamie Oliver and Nigella Lawson have built multimillion pound industries off an ability to cook, with flair. The cookbook industry publishes hundreds of new titles every year. But as the era of cheap, abundant food comes to an end so too does our notion of food as an innocent, simple pleasure. Now it's investigative journalists and scientists who are writing books about food and it is pretty gloomy stuff.

What they're telling us is that it is not enough to know how to cook the stuff. If you want to be a really good cook you have to be ready to ask some questions. Questions about where your food comes from, how it was produced and just how much of it you actually need?

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle by Barbara Kingslover, plots her and her family's efforts to live off the land for a year. If this doesn't make you want to plant a vegetable garden nothing will.

In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto by Michael Pollan, was a follow-up to his successful book on food production (mentioned below). It affirms the joy of good eating but is summed up by the author as, "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."

The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals, also by Michael Pollan reveals the unpleasant reality of the food chain in the US, in order to define the perfect, truly sustainable meal.

Also worth reading is the letter Pollan wrote to President-Elect Barack Obama entitled *Farmer in Chief* - http://www.ecoliteracy.org/publications/michael_pollan_farmer.html

New York Times columnist Mark Bittman's *How To Cook Everything* is probably the first cookbook that deals with the changing nature of our food.

Other books that recently came to our attention but we have yet to read include:

- *Intellectual Property, Biodiversity and Food Security*, edited by Geoff Tansey and Tasmin Rajotte
- *Bottomfeeder: How to Eat Ethically in a World of Vanishing Seafood* by Taras Grescoe
- *The End of Food* by Paul Roberts
- *Slow Food Nation Why our Food Should be Good*, Carlo Petrini
- *The Whole Food Almanac*, by Michelle Matthews

How to improve Shopping IQ

It is encouraging to note that there has recently been an increase in concern about where our food comes from, how it's produced, and how that affects our health and environment.



Melamine in milk, potatoes washed in chlorine, 'baby' carrots cut on a lathe, growth hormones in meat, these are just some of the issues that have recently become a concern for consumers. People are beginning to get antsy not just about the nutritional value of their food but more importantly starting

to question the process that brought that food to their table.

In the past few months GreenChoice was able to participate in a study on consumer's meat preferences and their understanding of free range meat. It was interesting to note that most South Africans are not aware that there has been a change in the farming practices in the past few years - most still assume that the majority of our meat is free range. The reality is that around 80% of our beef is factory farmed and the percentage increases for pork. Even lambs are now frequently 'conditioned' in factory farms before slaughter.

The challenge is to get the information out there - let people understand the implication of their choices - so that it's possible to make an informed decision. Indications are that the better people understand the issue the more likely they are to change their purchasing habits.

Go on, tell us a story

Colourful, true life stories are one of the best ways to spread the pro-environmental message.

The journey towards sustainable products is essentially an experience and telling true-life stories is an effective way of describing this experience to others. Stories encourage people to follow the example of successful behaviour, they create mental images and memorable anecdotes to share with others and encourage an emotional or intellectual response.

We loved the story of the trials and tribulations of training a furious and territorial Alpaca to become a cooperative member of a predator friendly farm in the Karoo. Or the tales from a wine maker on the Agulhas Plain who told us when he took out a group of wine masters they photographed the fynbos rather than the vineyards! This same farmer - who has yet to see an increase in financial profits since his shift to sustainable production - says he now hears bird song all year round and sleeps better at night in the knowledge that he has done the right thing. There are many more stories like this one. If you know a good story please feel free to share it or to point us in the right direction, tell us who to speak to and we'll do the rest.



Partner News and Events

GreenChoice's partners in agricultural, fisheries and wild harvesting initiatives have had an eventful past six months. Here are just a few of the highlights.



The **Biodiversity and Wine Initiative (BWI)** has launched its consumer label. The distinctive label is intended to drive consumer awareness for those wine makers who have committed to protecting the natural habitat on their farms. In the lead up to the Christmas festivities BWI has also launched a consumer pamphlet listing all participating wine farms. These will be distributed in store and through special events, tourism offices and wine farms.
www.bwi.co.za



Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (Sassi) has had an extraordinary few months. In addition to scooping a Mail and Guardian Greening the Future Award it also achieved international recognition. Sassi's FishMS was profiled in a UN report on how mobile technology is changing the way environmental messages are communicated.
www.wwf.org.za/sassi

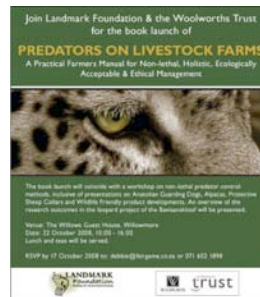


The **Endangered Wildlife Trust's** Carnivore Conservation Group, with support from The Green Trust, are conducting a critical assessment of the **Badger Friendly Labelling Programme (BFLP)**.

The primary aim is to establish the contribution to conservation of Honey Badgers. This will be determined by conducting a full survey of the BFLP supply chain, including beekeepers, retailers and consumers.

The assessment will help to guide decision-making over the future implementation of the initiative. The aim is the development of a more holistic labelling system that takes into consideration not only the reduction of badger-beekeeper conflict, but also other environmental aspects of honey production (e.g. organic, poison use, etc). Anyone wanting to find out more about this project can contact Ulrike Irlich: 079 175 1200, email: ulrikei@ewt.org.za
www.ewt.org.za

Woolworths Trust, the **Landmark Foundation** and the Baviaanskloof Farmers Association have published, *Predators on Livestock Farms*, to support farmers' predator management efforts. The book was launched at a holistic, non lethal and ethical predator management workshop. First published in October, it has been welcomed by farmers and is now going into its second print run.



CapeNature, by amending the annual Provincial Notice on Hunting for 2009, has ensured that from January 2009, certain methods, such as gin traps and night-hunting, may no longer be used as methods to manage damage-causing animals in the Western Cape Province. This is an important step toward the widespread adoption of predator friendly farming.

C.A.P.E has launched its new website www.capeaction.org.za/. The website is updated daily and consists of news, events and other related information. GreenChoice is pleased to have been able to support the development of the business & biodiversity information & lesson sharing section, which can be found at www.capeaction.org.za/index.php?C=bio&P=2.

The **Cheetah Outreach** has joined GreenChoice. We share common goals, particularly that of reducing agriculture's impact on biodiversity in South Africa. Cheetah Outreach's biggest influence in this regard, is through the Anatolian Sheepdog scheme, which provides livestock farmers with an Anatolian dog. Cheetah Outreach covers all costs in the first year and De Wildt monitors farmer compliance to non-lethal predator control methods. A pilot project is currently underway with a number of Woolworths' lamb suppliers.

Conservation International extended its commitment to GreenChoice by appointing an intern to the project. We are delighted to have the valuable support of Anneke Cilliers who has an ecology background and a personal interest in sustainable farming.

Conservation International recently invited Michael Matarasso, the organisation's Manager, Strategy Design for Global Communications, to South Africa. Michael facilitated a week long workshop aimed at targeting producer behaviour in Namaqualand. The outcome was a strategy for activities and messaging around better farm management practices in the area.



"Eating is an agricultural act."
Wendell Berry

The GreenChoice partnership 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.

GreenChoice's partners include; Birdlife South Africa, CapeNature, Cape Leopard Trust, Cheetah Outreach, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Flower Valley Conservation Trust, Landmark Foundation, Botanical Society of South Africa, South African National Botanical Institute and the Wilderness Foundation.

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