

Feedback Sustainable Management of Honeybush Workshop

Dear all,

With this document we intended on looking back on the last workshop held about honeybush and report on the results of the survey undertaken by some of the PRESENCE students in the Langkloof. These are valuable information that should be shared to all the attendees and the ones that couldn't attend the workshop; hence we wrote down the most important insights. Hopefully this information can be used, improved and the work can continue in the future.

This workshop was organized by PRESENCE partners, under the coordination and facilitation of Living Lands and supported by Table Mountain Fund – WWF.

General

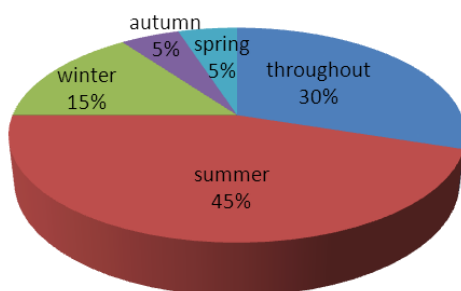
The workshop was held on the 5th of February, 2013. In total 36 people attended the workshop. The aim of the workshop was to gather all the stakeholder to establish a baseline of harvesting and management practices and to create awareness.

During the workshop Valerie Reijers and Luuk Huijgen presented the results of a survey on harvesting and management practices conducted among farmers, harvesters and processors. This presentation was used as a thread through the workshop. The results were divided in several topics including: harvesting practices, land management, sustainability issues, legislation and cultivation. Besides, Gerrie Ferreira from DEDEAT and Marlise Joubert from SAHTA both gave a 10-min. talk. The workshop ended with a discussion on the way forward.

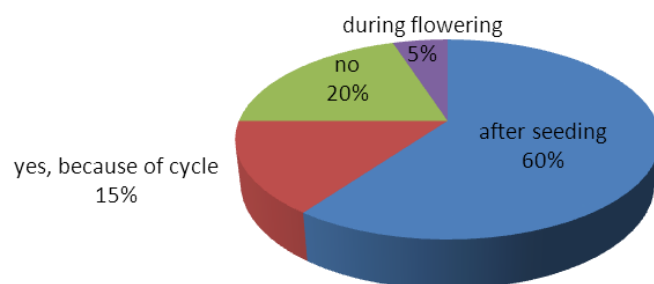
Research results

In total 22 farmers were interviewed. 45% of them started <2 years ago, 25% had more than 15 year experience. For 25% of the farmers Honeybush was their main income. 55% of the people only harvested in the wild, 10% only from cultivation and 35% did both. Mainly wild *Cyclopia intermedia* is harvested and most harvesters did not collect seeds. Half of the farmers harvested themselves or supervised the harvesting.

Harvesting season

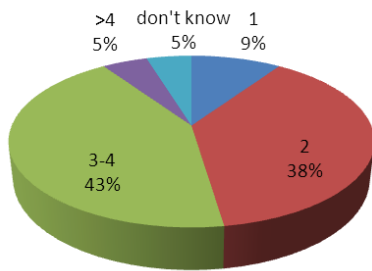


Take into account seeding

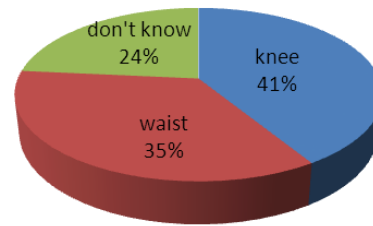




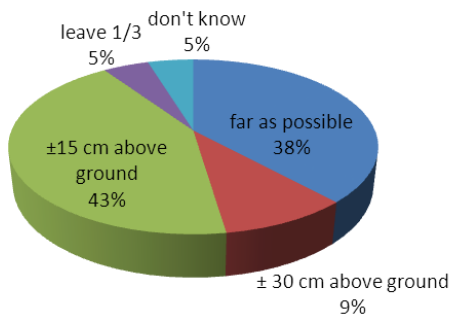
Harvesting cycle *C. intermedia* (yr)



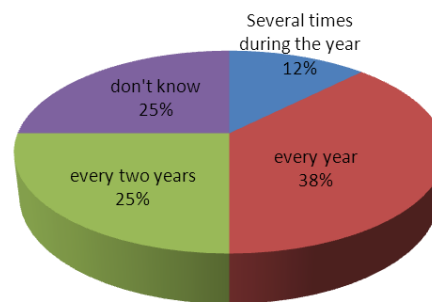
Necessary height *C. intermedia*



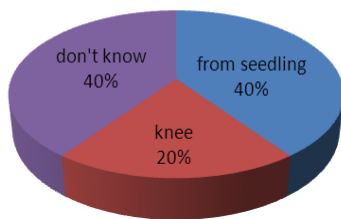
Harvesting height *C. intermedia*



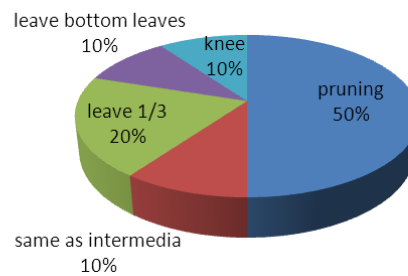
Harvesting cycle *C. subternata*



Necessary height *C. subternata*



Harvesting height *C. subternata*



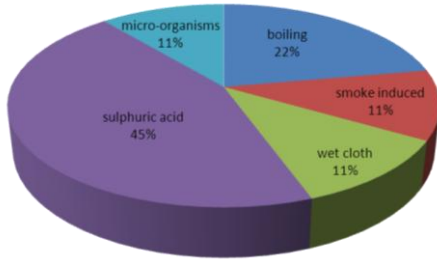
Almost no **land management** was practiced in the wild harvested areas. Only few farmers carried out controlled burning or fire protection. More or less 50% of the people encountered stealing on their land. Almost none of the farmers monitored the population but 50% monitored their production.



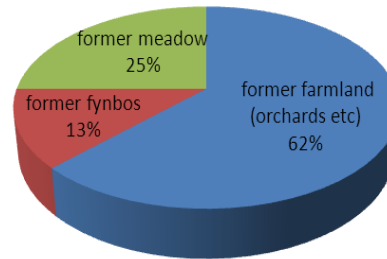


In **cultivation**, weeding and irrigation were common but pest control not.

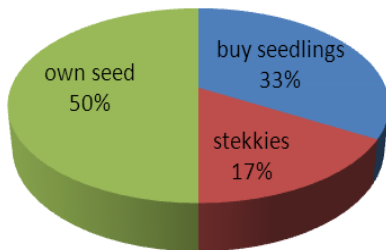
Germination



Former landuse



Planting



The survey results are presented below, highlighting the main answers:

- Most people believed that harvesting Honeybush is not harmful for other plants or Fynbos.
- Most people liked to see controlled harvesting in nature reserves.
- Everyone believed that they harvested in a sustainable way.
- Everyone agreed on the fact that more research should be done (preferably by universities) and that exchange of knowledge between farmers and research is absolutely necessary.

Workshop minutes

Harvesting techniques:

After presenting the results on harvesting techniques a discussion started about the best time/season to harvest. First there were some comments that harvesting after seeding season is only relevant in the case of wild harvesting. Marlise Joubert said that the plants would put a lot of energy into creating seed instead of biomass, therefore cutting before flowering would be more appropriate. Pieter van Rensbergen believed it would be better to let the seeds fall on cultivated lands as well, so more new seedlings would establish and a more natural soil composition would be created. Marlise said you should prune the plants so they won't flower. People reacted that it is not always possible because cutting huge amounts of flowers takes too much time and it is impossible when you want to harvest year-round.

Next a discussion started about at what age wild *C. intermedia* should be harvested. It has been said that the stems should be orange not yellow. Quinton Nortje made the remark that the plants are still too young then, the stem should be brown, not only for survival but also for quality. Besides, you



shouldn't cut right after seeding because the plant won't have enough reserves for resprouting. Normally, after 5 years you could harvest the plants. However, regrowth and the life cycle are dependent on rain and climate. You have to see the plant to decide whether it is ready to be cut. Drought is the biggest enemy and if you cut every 2 years the plant is still flowering and will not have enough reserves to resprout (the leaves will start falling off). George Ferreira said that Nortje's practices don't have to be true for other areas with different climatic conditions.

Management:

After presenting the results there was a discussion about 'cold' and 'hot' fires. George commented that it is better if it doesn't rain for a while after fire, resprouters then have an advantage because they can regrow while competition can't. People said you can't manage fire; it's too difficult and risky. Quinton said it's maybe not the heat but smoke the seeds need for germination. At least you don't need so called 'hot' fire because it destroys species. The right time to burn is during the night when the soil is a bit moister. Managing fire is about knowing and taking into account the weather conditions and having a very strict management of the area.

Then cattle is discussed, it is said that the stocking rate (amount/area) is important and should be low. Quinton said cattle eats young plants. Several people told stories about the damage sheep can have, because they eat the plants. George said different types of cattle eat different things. Conclusion is it depends how much and what kind of cattle you have.

Sustainability:

Quinton told that for sustainable harvesting it is important you let the plants set seed and let them grow. It is important you understand the life cycle of the plant and monitor your plants. A concern about where to do cultivation is brought up; it shouldn't be on former fynbos. Most people don't think this will happen because there would be enough former arable land which can be used.

Legislation:

Firstly, Gerrie Ferreira gave his presentation. He told about the control around the growing industry, with more than 30 legal cases going on at the moment. People register under false names and stolen tea is sold under different names. Within communities there is no control and for the 12 coops that have been created there is not enough work. Someone from the CDC started a discussion about involvement of communities. What could this workshop provide for their project? Furthermore, the way the permit is written is not understandable for many people. Pieter said that the idea of this workshop is to formulate a policy where everyone can benefit from. Dieter van den Broeck (*Living Lands*) explained that people said there was a lack of information and collaboration, many different projects but no collaboration. Living Lands is an organisation that supports collective understanding and dialogue between people, as through workshops. He said he doesn't have solutions; the solutions are within the group. The goal is sharing of information and bringing people together.

Gerrie said he wants to try to get control and then set up guidelines. Living Lands is actually doing what the DEDEAT should do, since DEDEAT don't have the resources. He just wants to gain control of the industry in a positive way.

Hereafter there was a short discussion on harvesting in nature reserves. Pieter said that Gerrie needs a huge amount of supervising staff, otherwise it can't be done. However, it should be realistic, people



should put pressure on local government to get supervisors who don't sit in an office, but come with them to the field to supervise. Not only Honeybush, but also medicinal plants are stolen. Dieter said that right now ECPTA's stand is no harvesting, because they don't know the implications of harvesting and the lack of control.

Cultivation:

Earlier Clive Tillet brought up the problem of two threatening insects; a big wingless cricket which opens the pods and eats all the seeds and a tiny snout beetle which goes through the seedpods. In some areas in the Tsitsikamma he saw 90% of the plants without seeds.

After presenting the results there was a short discussion on planting *C. intermedia*. Marlise said it's commercially not very interesting. Dieter brought up the idea of organizing a meeting between processors and harvesters on how to best increase production but keeping the high quality.

Way forward:

Marlise gave a talk. She stressed the fact that SAHTA never wanted to stop wild harvesting, but right now about 25% comes from cultivation and the rest from the wild and they want to swap it around. About hybrids she said that work should be done by molecular biologists. ARC won't do it, they want to use pure species but cross pollination is possible. A question is asked about her helping the CDC project. Marlise said that she tried to in the beginning but that they won't listen. She is currently helping some people, but she can't help everyone. There isn't enough funding now. Then she said that she doesn't know much of wild harvesting, but that she knows some of cultivation and wants to get some people together. She collected names of the people who were interested and wants to organize some help/ information meetings on cultivation. Eventually people agreed to have a next workshop in three months which SAHTA wants to organize. To conclude the workshop Dieter asked everyone how they felt, and overall people felt very positive.

Research questions

A list of research questions was distributed and the attendants were asked to mark the most important ones. The list was compiled from the questions farmers had given during the interviews. The questions about harvesting guidelines were brought back to one question to get other interesting issues forward.

The first result was that all farmers are interested in many questions. It also clearly showed that farmers are mostly interested in practical questions and less in ecological or more scientifically questions. The most marked questions were:

- How do we set up guidelines? What should be in there? (What, when, how?) Need for long term cutting cycle experiment?
- Which harvesting techniques are sustainable?
- How to stop illegal harvesting? Will the permit system or Coops contribute to the stopping of illegal harvesting?
- What is the best way to germinate the seeds? Difference between the species?
- Establishment of seedlings/steggies. How big should the plants be?
- What is the best way to educate workers on sustainable harvesting and the benefits for them on longer term?



Conclusions

To end this feedback document of the workshop we made some conclusion from the discussions in the workshop. These conclusions are not the truth and open for discussion.

- Harvesting guidelines are urgently needed. However, these should be area specific. There should be continued meetings on how to develop these guidelines and to start writing them. To improve and specify guidelines a collective longer term monitoring program on harvesting practices and experiments under farmers should be discussed as a possibility.
- Fire is a very difficult to manage. Although it possibly could enhance stable production, most people consider it to be too risky. Only with a lot of skill and experience, a very good management of the area and right conditions controlled burning can be done. Therefore it is not advisable.
- Cattle can be hazardous for honeybush. The density should be kept low and alternative food should be available. Sheep are thought to be bad and there are records of sheep eating plantations. There are also areas where honeybush grows in the places where the cattle cannot get to.
- Several pests are considered to be a potential risk and there is no clear overview of them. A few unknown pests should be investigated as soon as possible.
- There are a lot of people starting with cultivation and there is a need for information on cultivation techniques.
- Most importantly there should be continued and more communication. The first step is frequent meetings and more focussed workshops. The next workshop should be in 3 months. Possible topics are: cultivation, management planning, (wild/cultivation) harvesting guidelines, legislation and control illegal harvesting, field days and community involvement.



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