THE SOUTH AFRICAN ROOIBOS COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST 10 YEARS

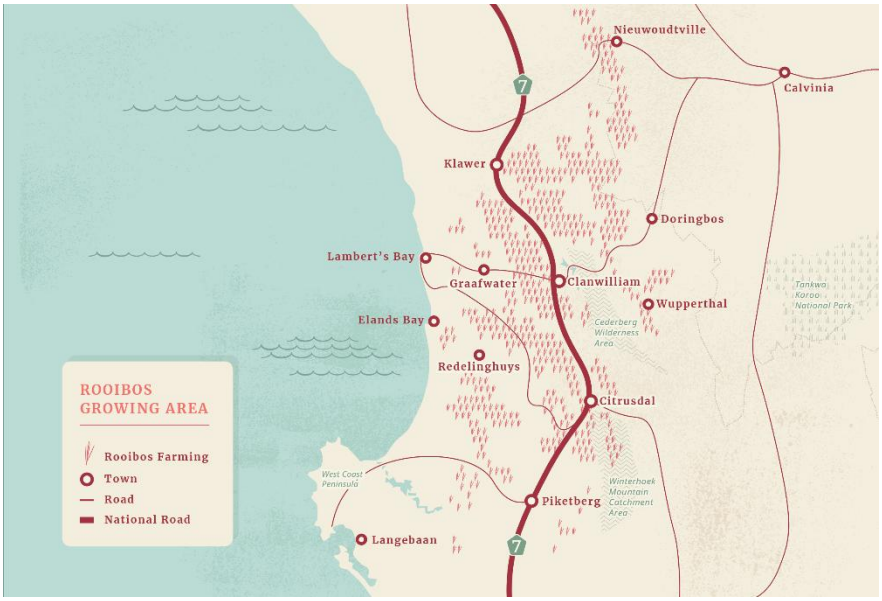
Contents

1. MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

As the South African Rooibos Council (SARC) marks its 10-year anniversary, we take great pride in reflecting on a decade of meaningful progress and collective achievement. Since its inception, the Council has played a pivotal role in protecting and developing the Rooibos industry, championing scientific research, driving effective communication, and supporting a thriving trade environment.

This report highlights the key milestones and initiatives that have shaped the Rooibos sector over the past decade. It is also a celebration of the dedication, collaboration and shared vision that continues to propel our industry forward. We are proud of how far we have come — and excited for what lies ahead.

2. ROOIBOS AT A GLANCE



Rooibos - *Aspalathus linearis* - is a uniquely South African plant that grows exclusively in a narrow 60 000-hectare belt in the Cederberg region along the West Coast. This area falls within the Cape Floral Region – the smallest and only floral kingdom found entirely within the borders of one country – and is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's 35 biodiversity hotspots. Although it covers less than 0.5% of Africa's land area, the Cape Floral Region is home to nearly 20% of the continent's plant species, including over 8 700 species of extraordinary botanical diversity. This is also the home of Rooibos.

Rooibos is one of the few fynbos species to have made a successful transition from wild harvesting to cultivation, becoming an economically significant crop. Over the past decade, Rooibos production has fluctuated due to environmental conditions such as rainfall and planting trends, with annual yields ranging between 10 000 and 18 000 tons. While current production is on a slight downward trend — from 17 000 tons in 2023 to an expected 13 000 tons in 2025 — total demand remains stable at approximately 18 000 tons per year, driven by both local and international markets.

> The total Rooibos sales in 2024 was equal to just more than 10 billion cups of tea – that is one cup for all the humans on earth with about 2 billion cups to spare.

SARC annually develops a Rooibos Information Sheet to share information on the industry and the activities of the organisation. This sheet can be accessed on the SARC website at 20240314_SARC-2025-Information-sheet.pdf

3. THE ROOIBOS COUNCIL

SARC was reconstituted in 2015 as an independent, voluntary organisation of likeminded processors, packers and branders with a vision of responsibly protecting and promoting the Rooibos industry for all its stakeholders and for consumers of Rooibos. The SARC members collaborate to ensure the growth and sustainability of the Rooibos industry, and their collective efforts have been instrumental in promoting Rooibos both locally and internationally.

Rooibos Limited, Cape Natural Tea Products, National Brands Limited, Joekels, Annique Rooibos and the Red T Company are the founding members and were joined by Cape Rooibos later in 2015, Skimmelberg became a member in 2018, and BOS Brands and African Extracts joined SARC in 2019. The members represent around 83% of the volumes in the industry.

Processors	Packer Branders	Brands
ROOIBOS LIMITED Preferred Supplier SINCE 1954 TEA PRODUCTS Cape Natural CAPE ROOIBOS The RED T. Company Rooibos	NATIONAL BRANDS LIMITED Joekels brands	ANNIQUE rooibos BOS skimmelberg AfricanExtracts™ ROOIBOS SKIN CARE

SARC has a Board of six members each working on a dedicated portfolio to support and advance the vision and mandate of the organisation.

- Martin Bergh: Core function and membership
- Dawie de Villiers: Compliance, legal and GI
- Adele du Toit: Marketing and promotion
- Déan Nigrini: Finance
- Joe Swart: Research
- Nicie Vorster: Corporate communication

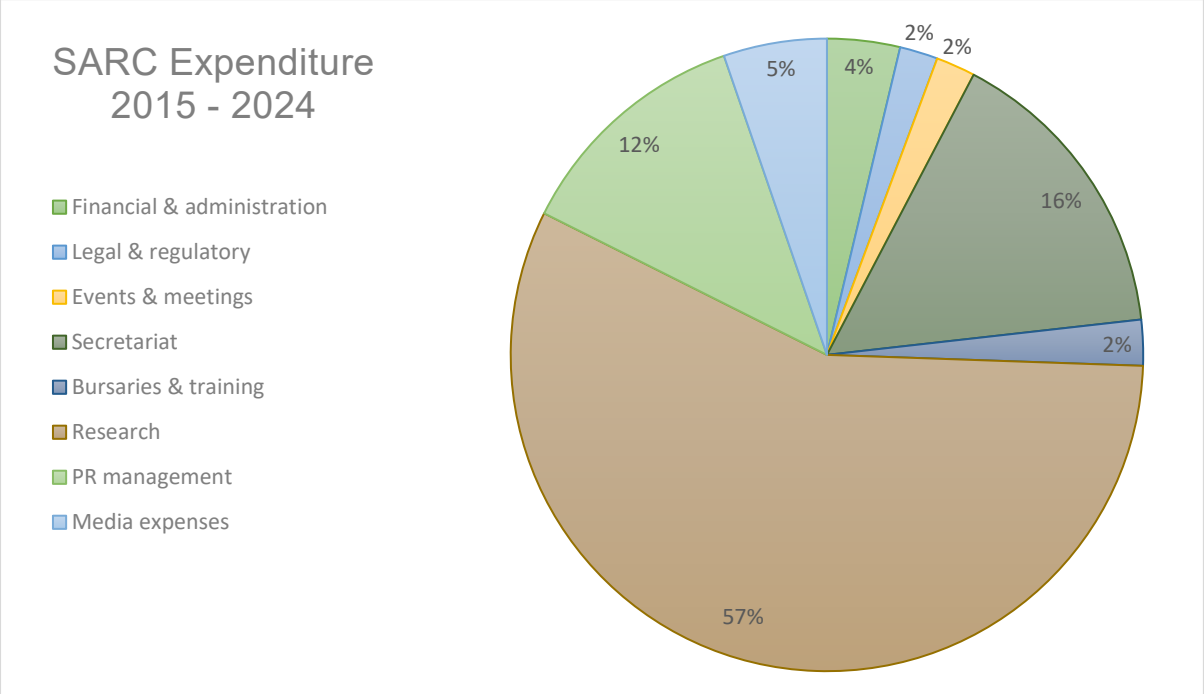
The Board meets quarterly and is supported in their work by Kruger, Swart & Associates who is responsible for the Secretariat, Meropa Communications who is the public relations and media liaison and a team of three researchers: Prof Jeanine Marnewick, Prof Amanda Swart and Dr Gerald Maarman supporting the implementation of the SARC research portfolio as one of its core functions.

SARC communicates about the industry, its activities and achievements on its website - Rooibos Council 2024 | SA Rooibos Council and has a dedicated email where the organisation can be contacted: info@sarooibos.co.za

4. INVESTING IN THE INDUSTRY

SARC funds its activities through voluntary volumes-based levies contributed by its members. Over the past 10 years SARC members have contributed R40 104 717 to support the activities of the organisation.

Aligned to its mission and vision, SARC fulfils a number of core functions. The main focus of SARC is to fund research into the health properties of Rooibos and to disseminate the research results to consumers and other stakeholders. Annually SARC develops and implements a media strategy to share research and interesting developments in the industry to keep consumers and the market informed. SARC actively engages with legal and regulatory requirements on national and international levels and supports its members and the wider industry to remain compliant. These actions contribute to the protection of the industry and the consumer and to the continued growth of the Rooibos market on national and international levels.



5. PARTNERING FOR DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

SARC understands that the Rooibos industry is part of a wider network where parties collaborate to address challenges and work for development and growth. Many of the achievements of the past 10 years were realised as a result of partnerships. SARC deeply values the partnership formed over the past decade and is committed to continue to collaborate with existing and new partners for the benefit of the Rooibos industry.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE)

- SARC and the DFFE closely collaborated during the negotiation of the industry wide benefit sharing agreement.
- The parties continue to work together in a solution seeking manner to implement the agreement and to ensure that all parties in the Rooibos industry remains compliant to access and benefit sharing regulations through the biotrade and bioprospecting permitting system.

Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD)

- SARC has collaborated with the DALRRD on addressing a number of regulatory and trade issues successfully.
- The Directorate: Plant Health was instrumental in supporting the industry in navigating the Chinese GACC registration of the industry and its members and enabling Chinese market access.
- SARC is currently working with the Directorate Food Safety and Quality Assurance on the review of the Draft Regulations relating to Rooibos and Green Rooibos products intended for sale in the Republic of South Africa to ensure that the regulations are aligned to the practical realities of the Rooibos supply chain.

Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI)

- In 2022 SARC and the DSTI entered into a partnership under the Sector Innovation Fund.
- Under this partnership the SARC was awarded R5 237 000 in matched funding to fund Rooibos research studies.
- This partnership made an incredible contribution to the SARC research portfolio and enabled the support of a high number of studies.

Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dtic)

- SARC and the dtic have been collaborating on trade issues since 2017.
- The dtic played a key role in liaising with their EU counterparts during the registration of the Rooibos geographical indication on the EU GI register.
- The dtic also assisted in successfully resolving a number of export trade barriers over the years.

Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB)

- SARC and the PPECB work closely together on the collation of the export figures for the Rooibos industry.
- The organisations liaise on a monthly basis and has over time develop a responsive and supportive relationship.

Agriculture South Africa (AgriSA)

- SARC became a member of AgriSA in 2017.
- In 2018 the two organisations collaborated through a matched funding agreement to implement a workshop where Rooibos producers could discuss the formation of their own organisation.
- This support resulted in the formation of the Rooibos Produsente Vereniging representing the interests of Rooibos farmers.

Union for Ethical Biotrade (UEBT)

- In 2021 SARC became part of a Value Chain Partnership Project funded by the Bio Innovation Africa project and led by UEBT.
- The project focussed on providing support to certified farmers through the development of guidance documents and Biodiversity Action Plans and implementing training.
- In 2023 this partnership was renewed and continues to focus on supporting farmers and the industry to remain aligned to international developments in certification.

UK Tea and Infusions Association (UKTIA) & the Tea and Herbal Association of Canada (THAC)

- In 2021 SARC entered into MoUs with UKTIA and THAC
- The MoUs focus on collaboration in awareness raising on Rooibos in these export markets and on assistance with access to information and addressing trade challenges.
- These partnerships have been incredibly successful in its aims and is of great value to SARC.

Rooibos Produsente Vereniging

SARC and the RPV entered into an MoU in 2023 and shares information and work on issues of share interest based on the partnership.

6. STREAMLINING THE TRADE ENVIRONMENT

Responding to threats and crises in the Rooibos industry is part of the mission of SARC and a key area of engagement for the organisation. Over the past decade SARC has actively collaborated with government on the review and development of local regulation and on resolving challenges and trade barriers in the export markets through bilateral engagement with the authorities in these markets. SARC also implements research and develops supporting documentation to enable Rooibos industry stakeholders and exporters to effectively communicate to markets in response to changing trade requirements.

The Protection, Promotion, Development and Management of Indigenous Knowledge Act (IKS Act)

- SARC commissioned a legal review of the IKS Bill in 2016 and continued to engage with comment on the Bill through parliamentary and other processes with a specific focus on the regulatory complexity and duplication it would introduce.
- After the Bill became an Act in 2019, SARC again engaged in legal review and comment on the proposed regulation and supported other industry organisations to join this process. This contributed to the regulations going back under review.

National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act: Chapter 6 (NEMBA)

- SARC first reviewed NEMBA Chapters 6 and 7 related to benefit sharing and biotrade and bioprospecting permits in 2017 and argued for simplified regulation.
- In 2019 SARC was included in an international task team convened by the Global Environmental Facility to further work on streamlining of legislative environment for access and benefit sharing in South Africa.
- This resulted in the industry implementing industry wide benefit sharing and compliance processes – a world first.
- SARC is currently engaged in the review of the new draft NEMBA Bill to ensure continued alignment to industry context.

Agricultural Product Standards Act (APSA)

- In 2017 SARC served on a task team reviewing the new proposed inspection protocols for the APSA. The engagement resulted in significantly simplified processes for APSA inspections.
- SARC is currently working with the DALRRD through the implementation of consultations and field visits to ensure the alignment of the Draft Regulations relating to Rooibos and Green Rooibos products intended for sale in the Republic of South Africa to industry context and practise.

Harmonised Systems Code for Rooibos (HS Code)

- In 2018 SARC started to research the various challenges presented by the fact that Rooibos did not have a dedicated HS Code including inability to effective trace the product internationally, confusing and differing classifications and codes in different export markets, etc.

- SARC worked with SARS and achieved a dedicated HS Code for Rooibos in the SA Tariff book in 2020. While this assisted with data collection for exports from SA ports, it did not yet address international challenges.
- SARC then applied to the World Trade Organisation for an international HS Code and a dedicated code - 1211.90 - was awarded in October 2022.
- This Code was however not aligned to the SA Tariff book and SARC again started the processes for local adjustment which was concluded in the SA Tariff book in early 2024 eventually achieving one HS Code for Rooibos in both local and international markets.

General Administration of Customs China (GACC)

- In 2018 SARC received a number of requests from industry members to engage Chinese customs on trade challenges with Rooibos and developed a submission that was shared in bilateral engagements with the Chinese authorities.
- In January 2022 the GACC came into force requiring complex registration processes for all production, processing, and storage companies exporting food to China.

SARC worked with the dtic to initiate and support bilateral discussions resulting in China reducing tariffs on Rooibos ranging from 15% - 30% to 6% in 2024.

- SARC started working with the DALRRD and Chinese customs to understand the legislation and to get the necessary registrations for the Rooibos industry in place.
- These processes were concluded in 2023 with the successful registration of all Rooibos processing and exporting companies on the system and removing significant barriers to trade for the industry.

Export market requirements

Export markets change allowed limits of certain compounds from time to time often with no or short notice periods resulting in exporters experiencing difficulty in entering these markets or having their shipments retained in port. Amongst others, SARC assisted with the following:

- In 2016 German supermarkets delisted a number of products including Rooibos due to the presences of Pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs) in the products. At the time Germany was the top export destination for Rooibos. SARC developed and implemented an industry wide testing and farmer training program and communication material which successfully addressed the issue.
- In 2023 Rooibos volumes were retained in Taiwanese ports due to the presence of benzoic acid in the product. SARC conducted research on the levels of benzoic acid in Rooibos and importantly illustrated that this is a natural metabolite and not added to the product. This was communicated to Taiwanese authorities and resolve the issue.
- In 2024 the EU released draft legislation related to Mineral Oil Saturated Hydrocarbon (MOSH) and Mineral Oil Aromatic Hydrocarbons (MOAH) and included tea and herbal infusions. SARC commissioned a study and liaised with Tea & Herbal Infusions Europe and UKTIA who conducted their own studies concluding that transfer of MOSH and MOAH was not observed in brewed herbal infusions.

7. ROOIBOS EXPORTS

SARC continues to support and collaborate on research into the health properties of Rooibos and disseminate the results of this research in both local and international markets. To support this, SARC has entered into Memoranda of Understanding with a number of tea and herbal infusion bodies in the United Kingdom, the European Union and Canada and shares information on Rooibos with these organisations on a monthly basis promoting awareness of Rooibos in export markets in an effective and cost-efficient manner.

These measures have contributed to steady growth of the export market from 5 900 tons per annum in 2015 to 9 700 tons per annum in 2024 and Rooibos now being exported to more than 50 countries. Since 2020 Japan has consistently been the top export destination for Rooibos with Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, the USA and France regularly being in the top 5 destinations. Cross border and intracontinental exports have increased meaningfully since 2016 when African countries entered the top 10 for the first time. Zimbabwe, Botswana and Zambia are consistently featuring in this group of top ten export market destinations since 2016.

From 2015 – 2024 a total of 80 354 848 kgs of Rooibos was exported. The top 10 destinations for the past decade are summarised in the table below.

Country	Total kgs	% of total exports
Japan	21 153 529	26%
Germany	15 167 537	19%
Netherlands	8 953 074	11%
UK	6 604 442	8%
USA	4 360 989	5%
France	3 128 899	4%
Poland	2 274 437	3%
Sri Lanka	1 521 153	2%
Botswana	1 285 910	2%
Zimbabwe	1 079 536	1%
Total	65 529 505	82%

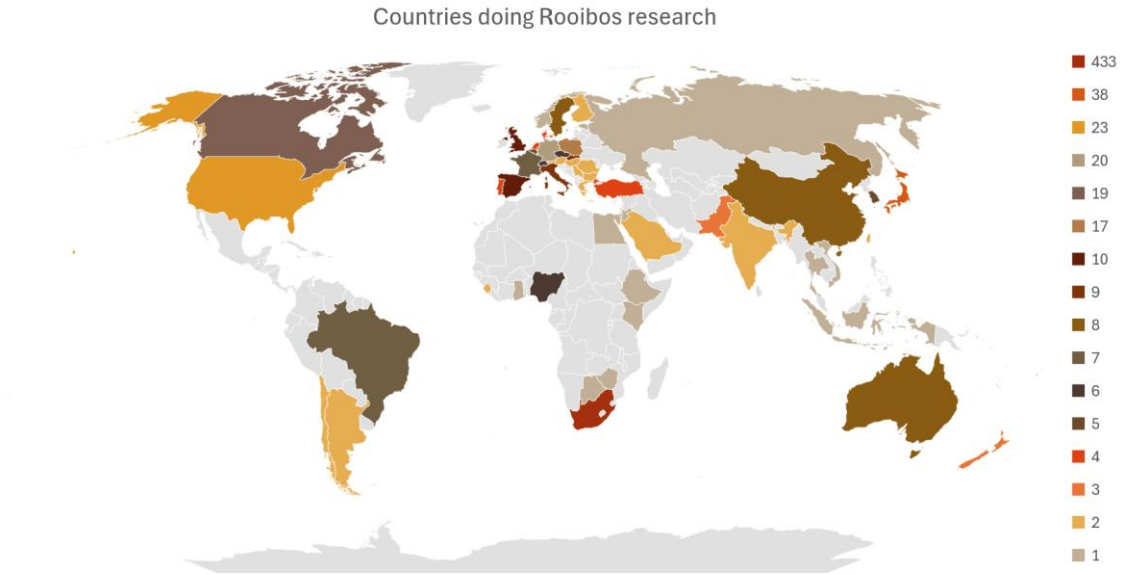
Big in Japan

- Many Japanese consumers prefer Rooibos in its purest form, without milk or sugar, and may even favour unfermented green Rooibos.
- The ready-to-drink segment is significant in Japan, with a third of these products sold through vending machines. Rooibos has been available in cans in Japan since the mid-1980s.
- The Japanese are particularly drawn to Rooibos's caffeine-free nature and perceived health benefits, such as its ability to promote a healthy gut and potential for relaxation.

8. THE SARC RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

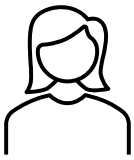
Research into the health properties of Rooibos is the main focus of SARC and the cornerstone of its mission and activities. The first article on Rooibos was published in 1962 and since then 735 articles have been published.

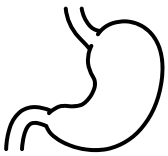
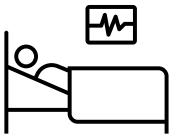
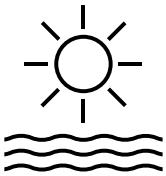
Sixty-two countries in the world have done or is busy with research on Rooibos. While the vast majority of research is still implemented in South Africa, Japan, USA, Germany, Canada, Poland, Spain and the UK are increasingly contributing to this body of work



Over the past 10 years SARC funded 24 research studies including two human studies and supported 32 lead researchers and their teams working on these studies.

The main findings of the past 10 years are summarised below:

	<u>Rooibos is good for the heart</u> • Rooibos, has very positive effects for patients with enlarged hearts reducing thickness of the heart in both the left atrium and the interventricular muscles. • Rooibos has a possible protective effect in cells of the lungs and heart for people suffering from pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH).
	<u>Rooibos can be beneficial for breast cancer</u> • Rooibos extracts are anti-estrogenic, i.e. blocking the effect of oestrogen in breast cancer cells and slowing down their growth. • Rooibos has both a protective and a therapeutic effect in cells affected by breast cancer.

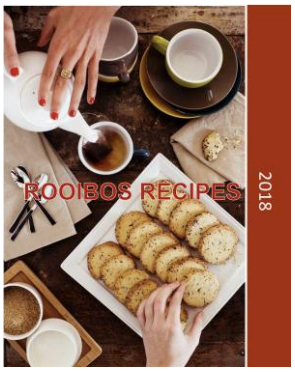
	<u>Rooibos protects the brain</u> Rooibos has both a protective and potential therapeutic effect in cases of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinsons Disease.
	<u>Rooibos is good for the gut</u> Rooibos is a prebiotic and has an anti-inflammatory and protective effect in the gut and can promote gut health.
	<u>Rooibos can help protect against lifestyle diseases</u> • The anti-inflammatory properties of Rooibos can help to alleviate the effect of metabolic diseases such as diabetes. • Rooibos supports controlling blood glucose in people with prediabetes. • Regular consumption of Rooibos may offer a convenient, healthy and cost-effective alternative to traditional pharmacological drugs for many chronic lifestyle diseases such as hypertension and obesity.
	<u>Rooibos is good for your skin</u> • Rooibos has a therapeutic effect when used in the treatment of chronic wounds. • Rooibos extracts targets premalignant skin cancer cells and inhibits cell proliferation and the further growth of cancer in the cells and has chemopreventive properties against UVB-induced skin damage. • Rooibos extracts have shown antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, potentially protecting against oxidative stress and slowing down wrinkle formation.
	<u>Rooibos supports you when you do physical activity</u> • Rooibos is rich in antioxidants, which can help protect against cell damage caused by free radicals, especially during strenuous exercise. • Rooibos can reduce physical fatigue, allowing athletes to perform better during repeated exhaustive exercise bouts. • Rooibos may offer some protection against altitude sickness. Rooibos consumption, particularly before or during high altitude excursions, might help reduce the incidence and severity of acute mountain sickness

Based on the positive results of the breast cancer and Alzheimer studies, SARC decided to fund two follow-up studies enabling the researchers to further work on these topics and gain more insights to the protective and potential therapeutic effects observed.

9. MEDIA AND MARKETING

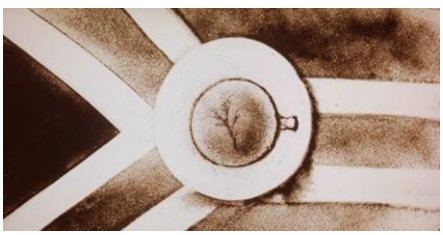
The main focus of the SARC public relations and media portfolio is to share reports on progress with research and the results of research with Rooibos industry stakeholders and consumers both locally and abroad. Over the past decade Rooibos has found its way into the hearts, homes and lifestyles of an increasing number of consumers worldwide and the SARC media portfolio developed and expanded to follow this trend.

SARC approaches media engagement in a structured manner and creates a media plan at the beginning of every year detailing how research, information, the activities of SARC and facts about Rooibos can be shared on a monthly basis. In the last 10 years SARC did 120 formal press releases and numerous additional engagements to share information and to raise awareness of Rooibos as a unique local treasure – and some would say the national drink of South Africa. See below some of the highlights over the past 10 years, some of which shone a light on issues specifically important to SARC.



Over the years more and more chefs and consumers started to cook with Rooibos and in 2018 SARC collated Rooibos recipes in a book available on the website. Cooking with Rooibos is a growing trend and new recipes and cooking videos are regularly shared in the social media and on the website.

In 2019 SARC collaborated with Storm in A-G Cup and CANSA to raise awareness of breast cancer and the importance of regular examinations by making a bra almost entirely from used Rooibos tea bags. The glamorous event where the bra was auctioned raised R750 000 for CANSA with the bra itself fetching R10 000 on the evening.



In 2020 SARC worked with Russian artist Anna Strelkova to create an animated video using Rooibos leaves. This video was made during the pandemic, and its intention was to remind South African's that similar to the Rooibos plant, we have strength and resilience even in times of hardship.

In 2021 SARC wanted to raise awareness on the importance of environmental sustainability and specifically of its relevance in the Rooibos industry. SARC collaborated with mixed media artist, Gina Waldman on an art installation, which consisted of almost 2 000 cups of various Rooibos blends that have been carefully positioned to form a globe when viewed from atop.

In 2021 Rooibos also had the opportunity to communicate on a number of research projects and shared information on how Rooibos can boost athletic performance, can alleviate allergies, is good for the brain and mental health and can support the health of those suffering from diabetes.

In 2022 we learnt about a Rooibos loving hippo. Jessica the Hippo was rescued when she was very young and when the time came to wean her off milk, Rooibos was offered as a substitute. She ended up loving it so much that she drinks 20 litres of Rooibos a day.

In 2022 the Sunday Times GenNext Survey found that South African youth saw Rooibos as the second coolest beverage. It was also the only herbal infusion to make it into the top 10.

In 2022 SARC made 4 videos – now posted on the YouTube Channel – to share more information on Rooibos including: 1) the Rooibos journey from farm to cup, 2) sustainable farming in the Rooibos industry, 3) the GI protection of Rooibos and 4) the Cederberg as the home of Rooibos

In 2024 Prof Marnewick and her team from CPUT finished the biggest human study ever conducted with Rooibos including 2019 participants. The study's most significant finding was the reduction in left atrium size, interventricular septum thickness and left ventricular mass. The first time these effects were observed in humans and a true breakthrough in Rooibos and heart health research.

SARC went social

April 2016

March 2022

February 2023

In 2016 SARC started to expand their media and communication strategy to include social media channels reaching an ever increasing and diverse group of consumers. Social media posts are now made 2 – 3 times per week and includes posts from the SARC influencers sharing lifestyle, cooking and inspirational tips related to Rooibos.

TK's Kingdom

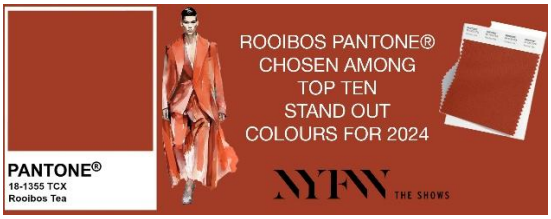
Clement Pedro

Sobekwa Twins

ROOIBOS COUNCIL

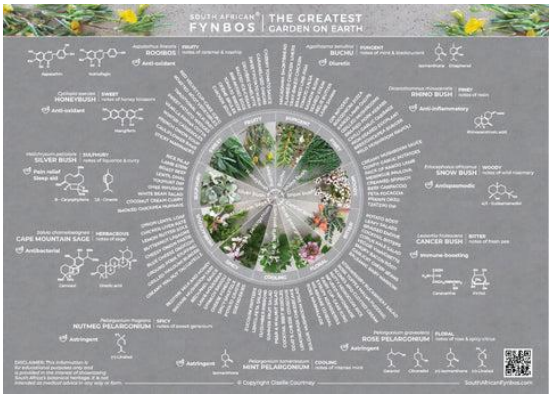
SARC was pleasantly surprised to see Rooibos finding its way into pop culture over the years.

2018 – Rooibos makes it into Marvel comic strips when psychiatrist Flo Mayer offered, She-Hulk a cup of Rooibos to calm her down.



2023 – The Rooibos Pantone® was chosen from among 2 390 colours as one of the top ten standout colours of 2024 at New York Fashion Week.

2024 – Rooibos is included in the virtual game Enshrouded as a rare material where users can make a cup to add to their stamina and endurance in the game or use its seed to create a plantation.



2024 – Rooibos is included in the South African Fynbos Food Pairing Wheel pairing well with crispy chicken wings, salted ice cream and tomato bredie amongst other dishes.

10. PROTECTING ROOIBOS

The Duras Project, focused on integrating scientific advancements with local knowledge to address challenges and promote sustainable development and innovation in the Southern African region was implemented from 2008 – 2010. Rooibos was included in this project and SARC collaborated with the Western Cape Department of Agriculture to achieve local protection of the name “Rooibos” under the Merchandise Marks Act in 2013. This first step set SARC and the industry up to pursue international protection of the name Rooibos.

In 2016 the Southern African Development Community - European Union Economic Partnership Agreement (SADC -EU EPA) presented SARC with the opportunity to protect Rooibos as a GI in the EU under this bilateral agreement. This protection was achieved in late 2016, but since Rooibos was included under a bilateral agreement focussed on development, the industry could not yet use the EU GI Seal and importantly at the time, the name Rooibos was not searchable in the EU GI databases.

In 2018 SARC decided to take the next step and register Rooibos directly on the EU GI Register ensuring the right to use the seal and be included in the official EU database on GI. This involved the revision of the product specification and several bilateral engagements with the EU counterparts, but after a long road resulted in Rooibos being granted Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status by the European Union in May 2021.

The PDO status recognises the unique geographical origin, characteristics and reputation of Rooibos and protects its authenticity and heritage. This ensured that only Rooibos grown in the Cederberg area and processed in the defined geographical area can now be called Rooibos in the EU. The fact that Rooibos was also the first African food product to ever be included in the register added to this incredible achievement.

The Rooibos industry is now able to use the seal, highly recognised in Europe, but also known on many other export destinations. This made a meaningful contribution to awareness of Rooibos, its characteristics and its origins both in the EU and internationally and presented SARC with numerous opportunities to communicate on Rooibos in the media but also included an article published on the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) website, making a presentation on Rooibos at the WIPO AGM and attending the French CIRAD GI conference to share the story of Rooibos alongside other GIs such as Champagne and Parma ham.

11. INDUSTRY WIDE ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING

The Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing as a supplementary agreement to the CBD ask of countries - like South Africa - who ratified these agreements to responsibly work with indigenous biological resources such as Rooibos and to fairly share benefits from the commercialisation of these resources with Traditional Knowledge Holders (TK Holders). In South Africa the principles of these agreements are included in the legislative framework under NEMBA.

In 2016 SARC, representing the Rooibos industry, met with the DFFE and the National Khoi and San Council and the South African San Council to engage on benefit sharing on Rooibos. At the time the parties were not aware that they were starting on a journey that will bring true innovation to how industries and TK holders engage with benefit sharing.

The negotiation process involved

- 11 negotiation meetings
- 4 small task team meetings
- 5 industry meetings

After a long negotiation process that lasted from 2016 – 2019, the parties reached agreement and signed a landmark access and benefit sharing agreement on 1 November 2019 ensuring that indigenous communities benefit from the commercial use of Rooibos. What makes this agreement so unique, and groundbreaking is that it was the first industry wide benefit sharing agreement in the world ensuring that benefit is shared not on individual company basis as was the practise until that point in time, but on all volumes of Rooibos covering the whole industry. The model developed for this agreement serves as a blueprint for other industries and in June 2024 the Buchu industry followed suit on industry wide benefit sharing.

SARC worked with the DFFE to develop a Standard Operating Procedure for the successful implementation of the agreement and from 2019 to date the Rooibos industry has shared R36 128 318 with the Khoikhoi and San communities.

It was also important to SARC to not only engage with benefit sharing on industry level, but also with compliance. Through its Secretariat, SARC developed and implemented a process to collectively facilitate biotrade and bioprospecting permit applications. All companies working with Rooibos was supported with their permit applications as part of this process and industry wide compliance was achieved in 2020. SARC continues to liaise between Rooibos industry members and the DFFE to ensure that the permitting process is implemented in a streamlined manner and industry wide compliance is maintained.

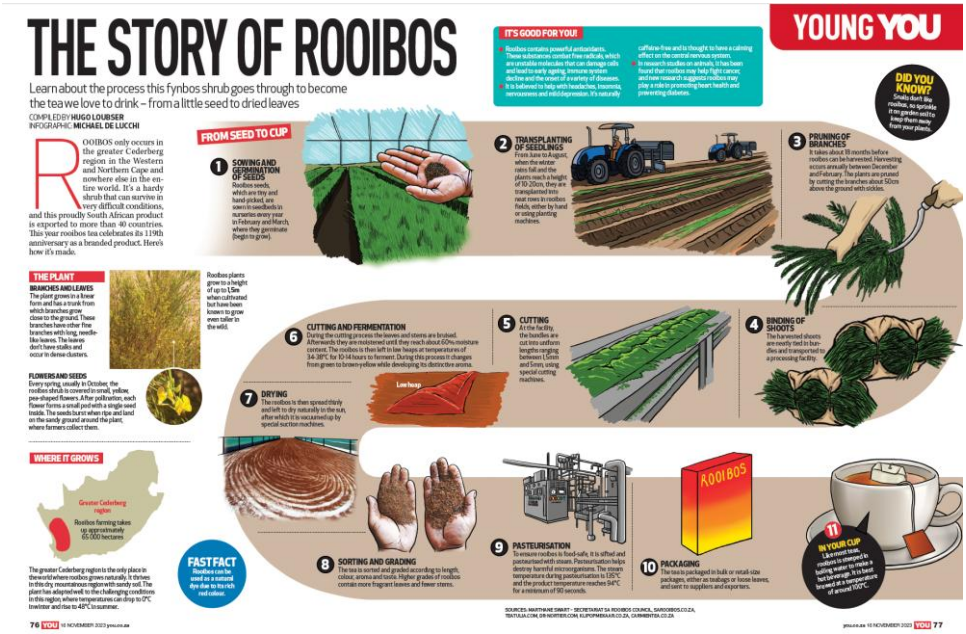
12. SOCIAL IMPACT

Over the past year, SARC also identified opportunities to contribute to training initiatives, support communities and contribute to the greater good.

In 2018 SARC applied for and was awarded the AgriSETA Commodity Organisation Special Grant for skills development and training to the value of R500 000. These funds were used to make bursaries available to those SARC members who were also members of AgriSETA and the remainder of the funds were used to develop and implement a training program based on needs identified by the Wupperthal community. The training program focussed on Good Agricultural Practises and the training of community health care workers. In the following year SARC also made funding available to implement a fire awareness program after the community of Wupperthal was severely affected by a fire which saw the loss of infrastructure and homes.

During the time of Covid -19, SARC wanted to do its part in supporting the heath workers tirelessly working on the frontline of the pandemic. The organisation donated 78 000 cups of Rooibos to designated Covid-19 hospitals throughout the country including Groote Schuur, the Brackengate Field Hospital in Brackenfell (Western Cape), King Edward VIII and Grey's Hospitals in KwaZulu-Natal and Charlotte Maxeke and Steve Biko Hospitals in Gauteng.

In 2023 SARC participated in a Huisgenoot / You Magazine campaign teaching young children about supply chains including Rooibos. The below infographic was developed in both English and Afrikaans to teach the younger generation about where Rooibos comes from and how it is made.



13. A FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

South Africa is experiencing significant biodiversity loss, primarily due to habitat degradation. Between 1990 and 2018, the country lost approximately 0.12% of its natural vegetation annually, with the rate doubling to 0.24% per year between 2014 and 2018. This accelerating habitat loss poses a serious threat to the nation's rich biodiversity.

In response to these challenges, the Rooibos industry has demonstrated how sustainable farming practices can protect endangered species, restore natural habitats and contribute to global efforts to curb biodiversity loss. Many Rooibos farmers are implementing measures to restore and protect the unique biodiversity of the Cederberg region. This includes habitat restoration, conservation of indigenous plant species and the protection of endangered wildlife, such as the leopard of the Cape.

Aligned to these efforts and the support of sustainable certification in the industry, SARC participated in a project jointly implemented by the United Nations Development Program and the Global Environmental Facility in 2024. This project resulted in the development of a Non-Detriment Finding and a Resource Assessment and Monitoring Plan for wild Rooibos creating a scientific baseline from where the industry can engage with monitoring and conserving wild populations of Rooibos. SARC is committed to support the continued monitoring of biodiversity in future and contribute to efforts for conservation where the organisation is able.

14. TOWARDS THE NEXT DECADE

In looking towards the next decade, SARC will continue to build on the focus areas and achievements as shared in this report. The Board believes that it is important to stay informed of developments both locally and internationally and to develop and implement initiatives that safeguard the industry against possible external shocks and optimises opportunities for the growth and development of the Rooibos industry.

To achieve this SARC and its Board will continue to collaborate with partners, invest in the industry through research and communication and engage governments and authorities to contribute to an environment conducive to growth.

In addition to what the Board is already working on, they want to gain an even deeper understanding of the needs of Rooibos consumers so that they can work better for them. In the international arena there is also an increased focus on sustainability and care for the environment and SARC wants to explore how the organisation can engage and contribute to this agenda through collaboration with national and international partners.

The past ten years has reinforced the importance of network and in the next decade, SARC wants to look towards the wider South African biotrade sector, share their knowledge and experience, learn from others and continue to create strong and resilient networks for the Rooibos industry and the biotrade sector as a whole.