

**The harvesting of sour figs
(*Carpobrotus edulis*) on
CapeNature Reserves on the
Agulhas Plain.**

A CASE STUDY **ITLE of the slide**
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The fruit of the sour figs (*Carpobrotus edulis* & *Carpobrotus aciniformis*) is a much sought after seasonal commodity occurring in the Overberg in numerous places where natural vegetation exists from the months of December through to March.

CapeNature's Walker Bay reserve cluster, depending on conditions, usually has an excellent sour fig resource.



This resource is illegally harvested on an annual basis and although law enforcement is carried out it is challenged by budget & capacity constraints.



The NEMA: Protected Areas Act allows for the sustainable utilization of resources within nature reserves. However there is often a lack of scientific knowledge in order to ensure that the species & linked biodiversity are able to withstand the impact of harvesting and this is a challenge that must be overcome before any harvesting can be considered.

With tools developed by the Sustainable Harvesting Working Group (SHWG) of the landscape initiative ABI (Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative) it was possible to score the sour fig species against the Vulnerability Index to Harvesting Model. This conservative score of 3 places this species in the range of very lowest concern and thus highly suitable for unmonitored harvesting although one would want to designate un-harvested reserve areas to ensure sustainability and persistence.

In 2007 the registered community project, the U'zenzele Community Development Organisation from Pearly Beach approached CapeNature for permission to harvest on the CapeNature reserves in the area. The U'zenzele CDO is a non-profit NGO consisting of Afrikaans and Xhosa speaking members of the low income community in the town of Pearly Beach. Employment is scarce and seasonal.



Various sectors of CapeNature were involved and consulted with regard to this application i.e. Scientific services, regional ecologist, community conservation, conservation services and reserve components. The application was approved with certain conditions attached and permits issued.



In 2008 a second harvesting application from the Stanford Community Health and Welfare Association (045-388 NPO) to harvest sour figs from the Walker Bay reserve was received. After consultation this application was approved. For this season the U'zenzele Community Development Organisation was given permission to harvest from the Pearly Beach, Quoin Point & Uilkraalmond reserves.

A brief overview from the U'zenzele CDO from the 2008/2009 harvesting season includes:

Total mass of Sour figs harvested = 11,334 tons.

Sour figs harvested = 1399 kg's in Pearly Beach

= 700 kg's in Uilenkraalsmond

= 9235 kg's in Quoin Point

The project has generated an overall amount of R100, 017-00 which has been used for harvester's salaries, harvester's transportation to the fields, administration and buying of equipment.

CHALLENGES

According to previous records the total harvest was very low as compared to previous 2007/2008 harvesting season. Causes could include the following:-

(1) Climatic conditions.

(2) Alleged illegal harvesting when the sour figs were not yet ripe.



It was possible in 2008 to conduct a preliminary draft resource base assessment of the sour figs on the reserves again thanks to the resource base assessment model drawn up & piloted by the ABI SHWG for harvestable species on the Agulhas Plain. The methodology was modified due to a capacity and budget challenge but initial results were obtained & a rough draft drawn up. Additional factors need to be worked into these results such as fire history, veld age.



To conclude:

Certain reserves in the Overberg are fortunate to have a species which is able to be harvested with minimal impact on the species itself and which can be of benefit to communities around the reserves.

This case study revolving around the harvesting of sour figs on nature reserves is directly aligned to CapeNature's corporate objective –

Promote socio-economic development through the conservation economy.

- * Develop and implement strategies to facilitate equitable access to and participation in the conservation economy.
- * Create access to the conservation economy through the implementation and management of appropriate initiatives and projects.

It is a project in progress & one which was only able to become a reality due to the dedicated co-operation and commitment of numerous individuals and organizations to conservation on the Agulhas Plain over a number of years.

Thank you.

