



## The value of Geographic Indicator status for African biotrade species and producers

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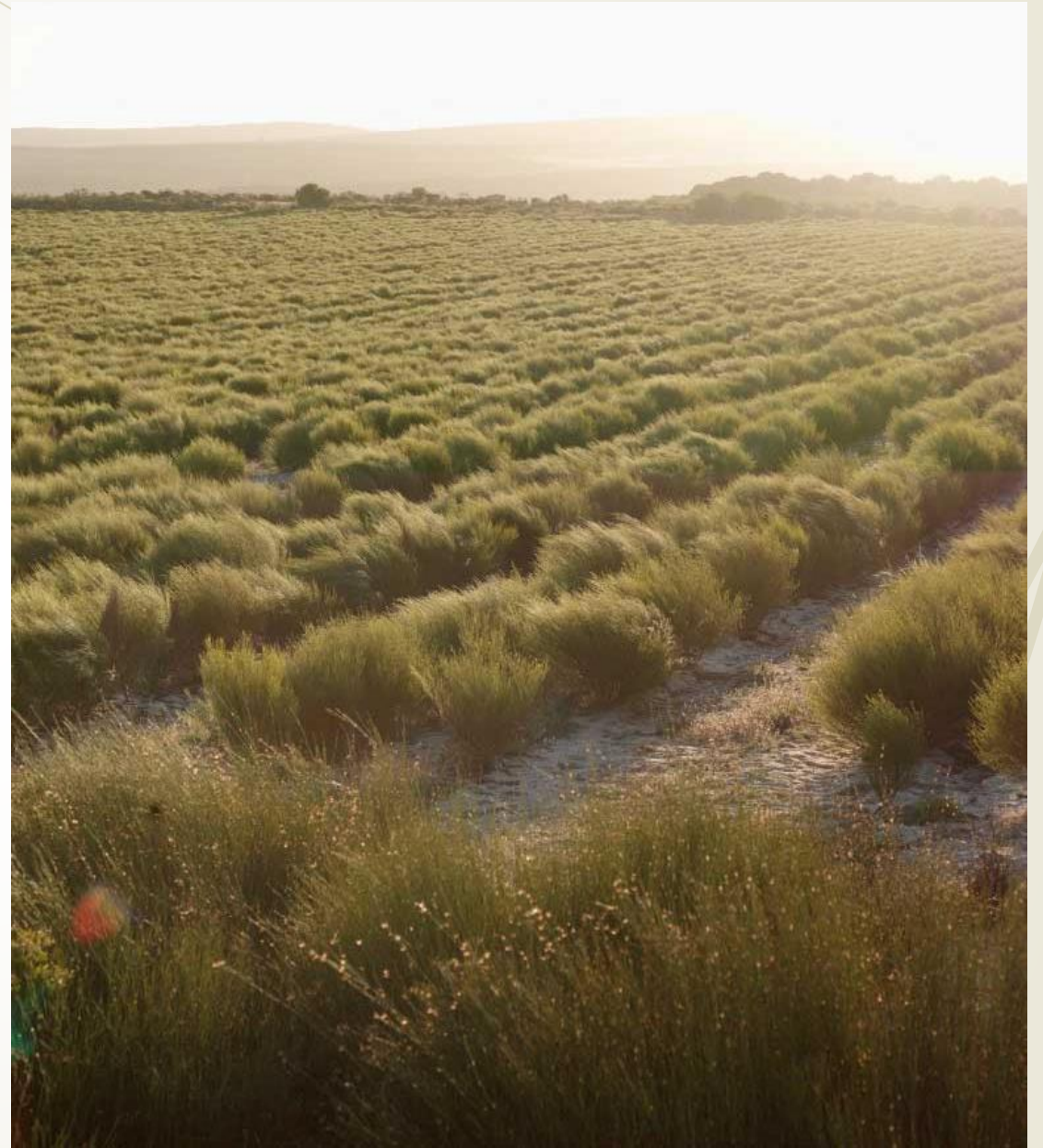
15 September 2023



# ‘ROOOIBOS’ / ‘RED BUSH’

The first African GI  
included in the EU  
Register

15 September 2023



# Overview

1. Rooibos and its home
2. Why pursue GI status
3. Different GI options
4. Benefits from GI status
5. Lessons learnt
6. Support available

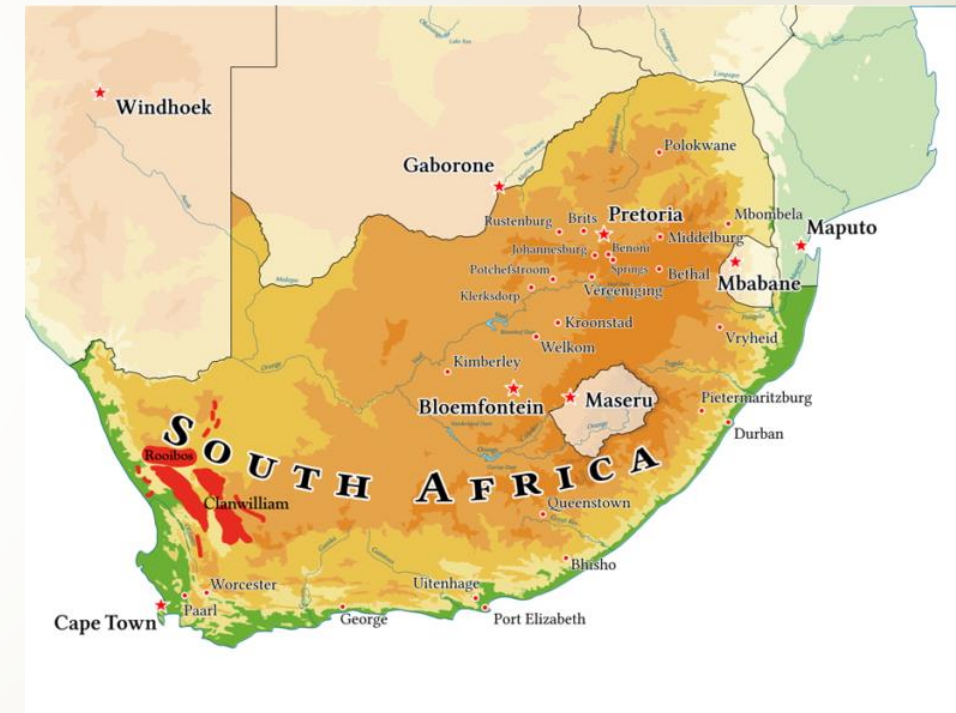


# The Rooibos Plant



# The home of Rooibos

- Rooibos is endemic to the Cape Floral Kingdom of South Africa which is UNESCO World Heritage Site
- It is the smallest of the six Floral Kingdoms in the world and is the only one contained entirely in a single country.
- It is very biodiverse: 8700 species which makes it one of the richest floras worldwide, surpassing many tropical forest regions
- In SA, over one third of all plant species occur in the Cape Floral Kingdom, even though it occupies less than 6% of the area of the country.





Rooibos is also  
called Red bush.

Which is really  
interesting since the  
brew is red, but the  
plant that Rooibos  
comes from is not.





- 'Rooibos' is an herbal infusion from the plant *Aspalathus linearis* which only grows in the South-Western part of South Africa
- Rooibos is a shrub-like bush which is part of the legume or pea family.
- It grows up to about five feet in height and has a smooth-barked stem from which subdivides close to the surface of the soil followed by delicate side branches each bearing, singly or in clusters, soft, needle-like leaves.







Rooibos only grows in the rugged mountainous areas of the Cederberg region of South Africa, where the winters are cold and summers very hot, which makes it a rare and special plant.



# The value of GI for the Rooibos Industry







# Why a GI for Rooibos?

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Rooibos Trademark registered by Forever Young in 1994 – use of word by other parties in the US prohibited – SA Government & Rooibos Ltd won case

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In 2013 the French Compagnie de Trucy, attempted to register exclusive use of the word Rooibos in France – SARC filed an objection with the French trademark authority

Not only about protecting the name, but also linking it to the region



# Benefits of GI: Protection

- Helps protect the name from misuse and imitation, while allowing Rooibos role players to use it without fear of litigation in foreign markets
- GI's include guidelines for how a product should be produced - ensure all Rooibos is high quality
- Rooibos is produced in a fragile ecosystem, and GI registration will help protect the unique biodiversity of the region





# Options for Geographical Indication



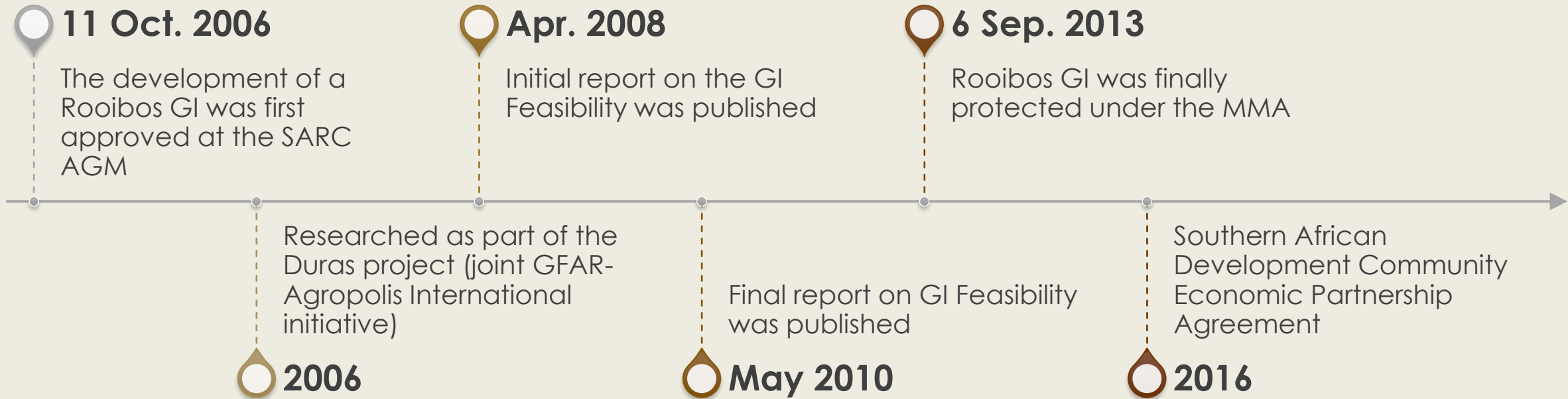


# Instruments for protection

- Local protection
  - Agricultural Product Standards Act
  - ***Merchandise Marks Act***
- EU protection
  - ***Economic Partnership Agreement***
  - ***EU GI Register***



# Process for the Economic Partnership Agreement





## From the EPA to the EU register

- Rooibos not appearing on the EU GI register
- Ability to use PDO status, logo and acronym in all EU languages
- High consumer-recognition of PDO logo
- Direct rather than negotiated right for producers
- Ease of application for further GI protection

# Process for submission and approval for the EU Register



Supported by EU Commission in Pretoria, dtic, Western Cape Government & EU Commission review committee



# Benefits of GI





# Benefits of GI: Marketing

- Adds value to Rooibos, and a GI would put more power in the hands of the farmers and producers
- GI links an area to a product, and is a powerful marketing tool for the region and could be used to promote other activities

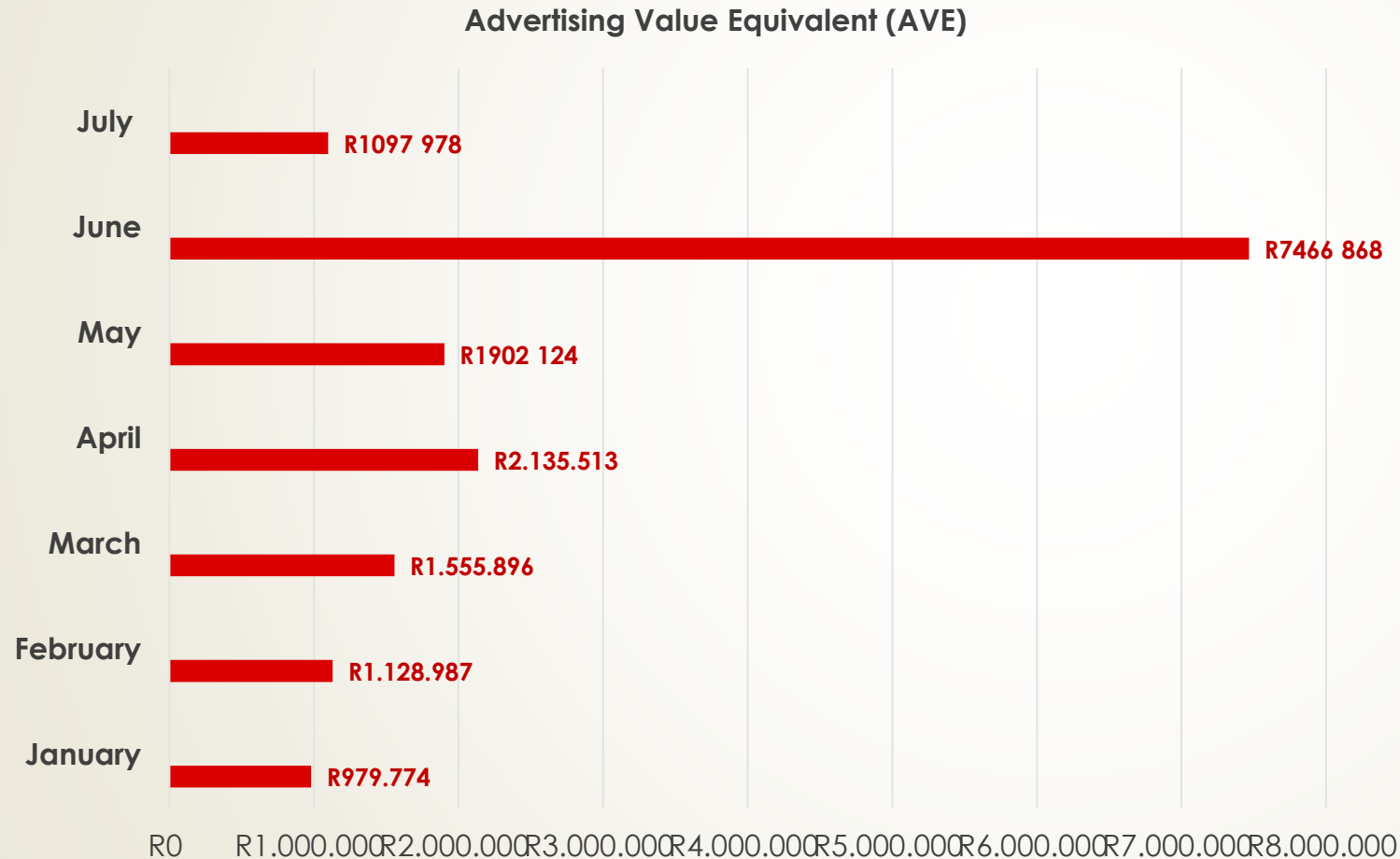






31 May 2021 'Rooibos' / 'Red Bush' received the honour to be the first product from Africa awarded the coveted status of 'PDO' in the European Union's (EU) Register of Geographical Indications (GI).

# Real benefit to the product



← June was an exceptional month due to the announcement of Rooibos' inclusion as a PDO GI in the EU.

Additional 76 340kg per month of exported on average after the inclusion in the EU GI Register; an increase of 11,6%.



Lessons learnt



## Lessons learnt

- Importance of having an appropriate domestic valorisation system
- Dedicated scheme management function (PPECB)
- Need a credible and inclusive custodian of the GI - strong industry collaboration and/or organization
- Challenges of translating foreign legal prescripts into local product realities - knowledge of EU requirements and regulation needed
- Technical institutional support framework as important – identify sources
- Immediate increase in domestic and international interest in Rooibos



## Observations for other producers

- Rooibos Industry could directly apply to EU but important to recognise and work through national authorities – opened diplomatic channels which proved very valuable
- Very long and complicated process, the comments and support received from the EU Commission was very valuable.
- Objections should be approached in a positive way. Benefit from years of practical experience & contributions prevented challenges which would only materialise at a later stage.

Support  
available





- SSAIP: Swiss South African Intellectual Property Project (funded by SECO)
- CIRAD: French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development
- SA GI Desk
- Industry organizations
- Local experts



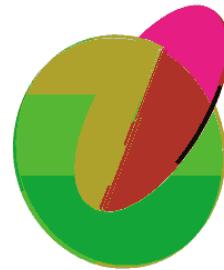
**IGE | IPI**



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**cirad**

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
FOR DEVELOPMENT

Thank you!

