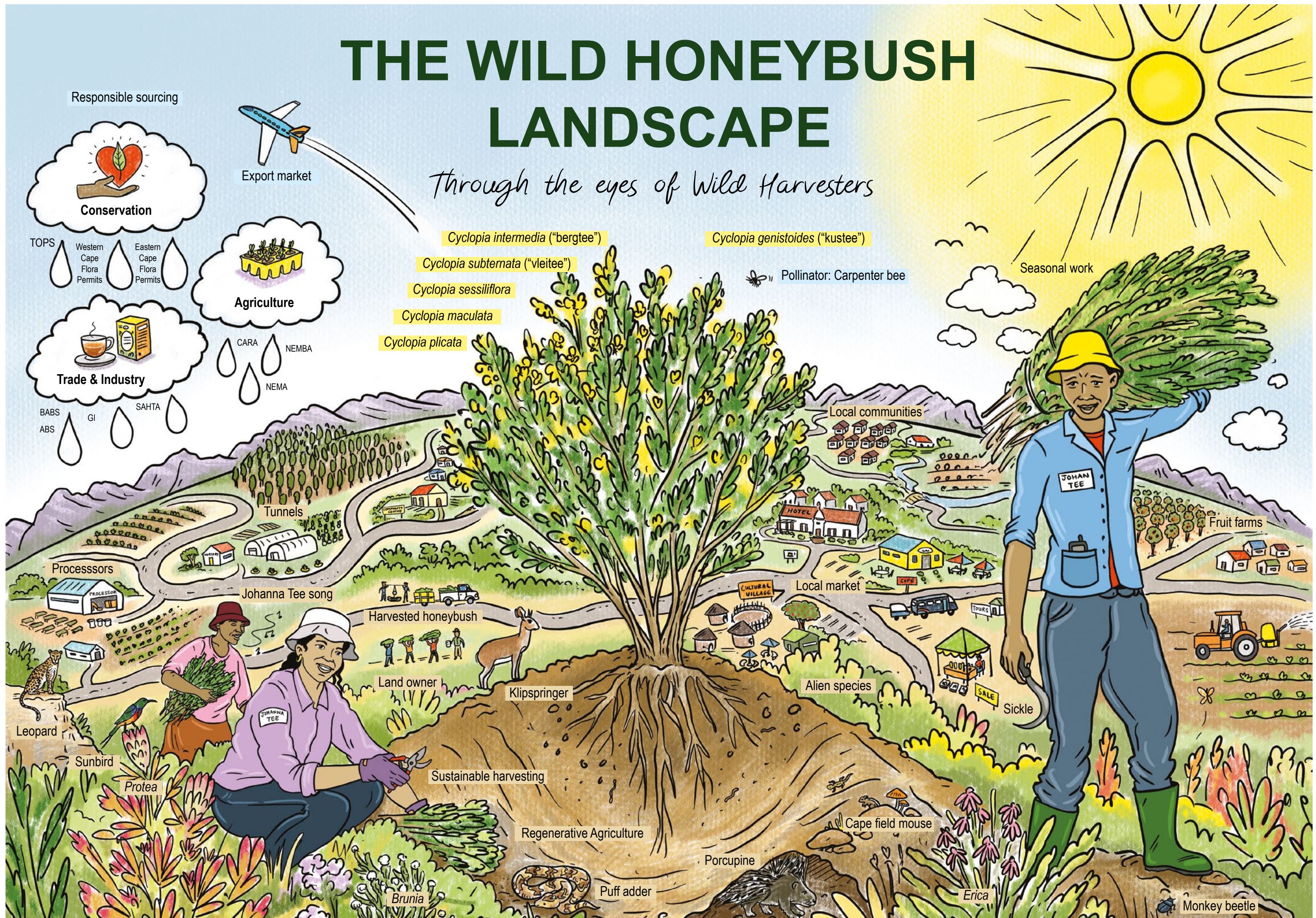


THE WILD HONEYBUSH LANDSCAPE

Through the eyes of Wild Harvesters



USING THE WILD HONEYBUSH LANDSCAPE



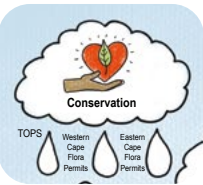
We suggest using the Wild Honeybush Landscape as a way to begin conversations about what is uppermost in people’s minds without losing context of the bigger picture.

1. You could start by asking everyone to share what is drawing their attention in The Wild Honeybush Landscape picture—and why.
2. You could then focus on parts of the picture you haven’t explored before, and invite others to share different perspectives.



Honeybush Species and Renewal

Honeybush (*Cyclopia genistoides*) is one of 23 species found only in South Africa’s Fynbos biome. Its growth belt spans the Eastern and Western Cape provinces, where the tea bush thrives in nutrient-poor, fire-prone habitats. In Tsitsikamma it is known as “Johanna Tee.” Six species—including *C. genistoides*, *C. intermedia* (“bergtee”), *C. subternata* (“vleitee”), *C. maculata*, *C. sessiliflora* and *C. longifolia*—are gathered both wild and on farms to make this sweet, aromatic tea. *C. intermedia* is a multi-stemmed resprouter that, after three years of growth, accounts for 85 % of the wild-harvested crop. Fire-adapted and resilient, its roots sprout again after burns, anchoring soils, feeding pollinators and symbolizing renewal for both land and people.



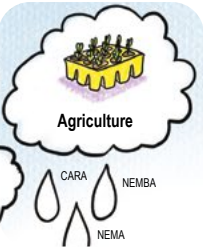
Cultivating Care: The Honeybush Conservation Ethos

Sustainable Harvesting & Permit Framework

The Honeybush Industry has taken sustainable harvesting to heart, becoming a recognised leader in good practice. Drawing on local ecological knowledge alongside conservationists, researchers and scientists, the community adheres to stringent TOPS regulations under the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (NEMBA) to define collection limits and issue permits for at-risk species. Eastern Cape Flora and Western Cape Flora permits further ensure any honeybush material leaving its native regions is tracked, preventing overharvesting and safeguarding wild populations. Navigating the permit process remains challenging, as accessibility and requirements vary greatly between the two provinces—greater consistency would go a long way.

Conservation Stewardship & Community Partnerships

SANBI’s Biodiversity Stewardship Programme collaborates with landowners and local communities to secure key honeybush sites within broader conservation landscapes. Although managing multiple permits and stakeholder partnerships can be complex, this coordinated stewardship model is vital for protecting biodiversity while sustaining the livelihoods of wild harvesters and their communities.



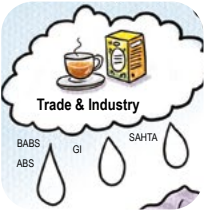
Honeybush Agriculture: Working with Regulations and Local Partnerships

Regulatory Foundations & Local Partnerships: CARA & NEMA

Agriculture in the honeybush sector thrives on collaboration between wild harvesters, local nurseries and landowners, all working together to care for both crop and habitat. Under the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (CARA), these partners design plantings that prevent soil erosion and curb invasive species, ensuring each new stand strengthens the resilience of the fynbos biome. Likewise, the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) mandates permits for clearing land or moving large volumes of earth—prompting landowners and harvesters to plan together, share local knowledge and safeguard sensitive landscapes before any soil is disturbed.

Community-Led Permits, Genetic Diversity & Harvester Rights

Growing honeybush from wild seed or cuttings requires NEMBA/TOPS permits—and its local partnerships that make compliance both practical and equitable. Harvesters, nurseries and conservation agencies co-design sustainable quotas and traceability systems that honour wild genetic diversity. Formal benefit-sharing agreements ensure earnings flow back to the people on the ground. By working hand-in-hand, these local actors can secure legal recognition for harvesters, protect biodiversity, and build a supply chain rooted in mutual respect and shared stewardship.



Strengthening Trade and Industry Resilience

Resilience & Local Market Development

This mix of farmed and wild plants strengthens fynbos resilience across the landscape, while wild harvesting sustains species diversity and local livelihoods. At the same time, growing South Africa’s domestic market builds stronger local demand and ensures fair terms for both harvesters and downstream partners.

Legal Recognition, Harvester Knowledge & Adaptive Governance

BABS and Geographical Indication (GI) frameworks give honeybush tea legal standing and added market value. They also reinforce conservation efforts and guarantee product quality. Across Langkloof, Elands Valley, Tsitsikamma, Plettenberg Bay, Uniondale, Haarlem, Misgund and Oudtshoorn, some 130 harvesters in 25 teams bring local ecological know-how. Involving them in benefit-sharing talks—alongside the Khoi-San-SAHTA dialogue—can help shape adaptive governance that benefits the whole system.

Production & Cultivation Balance

South Africa’s honeybush tea sector produces about 100 tons a year. Cultivation now supplies 53 %—enough to ease pressure on wild stands. Early forecasts expected higher farmed yields, but today’s split helps protect wild populations. Wild harvested Honeybush dropped from roughly 80 tons in 2016 to 47 tons in 2023.

Responsible Sourcing in the Honeybush Industry: Bridging Local Stewardship and Global Standards



International Market Nagoya Protocol & Responsible Sourcing

For export, compliance with the Nagoya Protocol is non-negotiable. Under this international framework, companies must secure Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and establish fair Benefit-Sharing Agreements with the communities who steward Honeybush. These requirements—while vital for market access—mean extra layers of documentation, auditing, and often steep fees for processors. Responsible sourcing practices, however, can transform these obligations into opportunities: by transparently tracing every batch back to its wild harvester community, exporters signal integrity and command premium prices abroad.

Local Market – Building on Responsible Foundations

Among wild harvesters, there’s a strong sense that if we begin with responsible practices at home—ethical harvesting, fair pay, and clear agreements—international standards become a familiar formality rather than a looming barrier. In other words –do what’s right locally and it will translate into global requirements. Partnering domestically with B&Bs, lodges, and small retailers not only spreads income year-round but also embeds stewardship values throughout the value chain. As processors and harvesters can co-design local buy-back systems, they lay the groundwork for seamless compliance when they scale up to export.

Clearing Up “Natural” vs. “Organic”

Natural Tea simply means the leaves are free from synthetic additives or flavourings; it isn’t a regulated term. Sellers can market Honeybush as “natural” as long as no artificial chemicals are used.

Organic Certification involves a formal audit process—inspections, record-keeping, and fees—to verify that the plants were grown and processed under strict guidelines (no pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, or GMOs). While it can open doors in some export markets, it also adds significant cost and bureaucracy.

In practice, many small processors start by labeling their products as “natural” to reflect genuine stewardship in the fields and factories. Over time, as partnerships strengthen and resources grow, they may choose formal organic certification—especially if targeting high-margin international buyers. For now, focusing on responsible sourcing at home builds both community trust and market credibility abroad.



Local Market: Quality, Diversification & Stewardship

Building Relational Agreements

Entrepreneurs and wild harvesters aim to negotiate buy-back deals with local processors—and work with B&Bs and lodges—to secure steady income from freshly packed Honeybush. These relational agreements, grounded in trust and shared stewardship, help ensure fair terms across the supply chain.

Shared Standards & Stewardship

All products—from wild-harvested Honeybush to off-season veggies—follow locally set quality standards and sustainable-harvest practices. Together if we focus our local market network on championing these practices, it will meet growing demand for authentic, eco-sensitive goods and nurture a thriving economy that works for all.

Year-Round Income

To balance seasonal harvesting, many harvesters:

- Clear invasive alien plants
- Hand-pick proteas
- Harvest timber
- Run small vegetable tunnels
- Income then flows from wild-harvesting to farm work, tourism gigs, and pop-up stalls.

