

Harpers Wine and Spirit – Gemma McKenna

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BREAKING: Sterling falls as investors look to safety of US dollar

Stellar Winery leaves Fairtrade foundation

Written by Gemma McKenna

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South Africa's Stellar Winery, which owns Stellar Organics and Running Duck brands, is leaving the Fairtrade foundation for another accreditation.

This means the company, the UK's best selling organic brand, will leave behind the familiar logo for the Fair for Life stamp.

Stellar Winery has also developed its own Eco-Fair logo, to be displayed on the label, to show that it's both organic and fairtrade.

Referring to its new Eco-fair label managing director Willem Rossouw said: "After 10 years we have grown up. It's time to fly on our own, not stay in the nest."

He said the reason for the switch was to find a more cost-effective and flexible system than the FLO (Fairtrade Foundation in the UK).

Fair for Life is a certification programme which audits fair trade in agriculture, manufacture and trading operations. Similar to the FLO scheme, it returns a premium to workers for social development, but unlike FLO, it doesn't charge a premium for marketing and administration, leaving more money for community investment.

Lee Griffin, brand and marketing director, admitted there was a danger customers would not easily recognise the new logo, but added that it would use QR codes and neck collars on bottles to put across its message.

The new-look bottles should be available on shelf in the autumn.

Stellar Winery in focus

In the last year it has doubled its production capacity to 15,000 tonnes as well as doubling the number of winery staff to 90. It employs 250 workers overall.

Since 2004, Stellar has moved from five organic farms to 14 independently owned sites, and plans are afoot to bring a further six farms into its estate within one year.

The group's workers have a 26% share in the winery and land, and it is launching a new non-profit organisation, the Stellar Foundation, to manage projects to improve the community, as well as lobbying government. A senior Oxfam director will sit on its board.

In 2008/9 the group invested R1.55million, or 41% of its net profit, in schooling, housing and healthcare projects for its workers and the wider community.

Stellar Winery's first vintage was in 2001, and it began exporting to the UK at the end of 2003.

It now sells 750,000 bottles per year to the UK market, out of the 2 million it produces annually. It is distributed by Ehrmanns in the UK.

