



PRESS RELEASE

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Fairtrade flourishes in arid Namaqualand

The perfect double formula - fair trade and bio-friendly – is thriving at Stellar Winery in Trawal, the first organic wine farm in the world to receive international Fairtrade accreditation.

“Stellar farm workers reap the benefits of the Fairtrade accreditation and organic farming practices in a tangible way,” says Maria Malan, chairperson of Stellar’s Fairtrade committee.

Companies boasting this accreditation are recognised for their empowerment of economically disadvantaged workers. Says Willem Roussouw, operations manager: “The benefits to the workforce from Fairtrade generate positive feedback, impacting favourably on the business as well as the broader community in the area.

“A surcharge is placed on products bearing the Fairtrade Mark. The money received from this surcharge is channelled into projects that the worker-elected committee pinpoints as priorities,” says Malan.

“We received R50 000 in 2004 which was used for fencing of our homes. The 2005 payment has increased to R225 000, which will now be used towards the purchase of shares in the winery.”

Malan’s remarkable progress, from domestic worker to farm manager, exemplifies Stellar’s commitment to fair labour practices and economic upliftment. Malan is responsible for 200 workers at South Africa’s largest organic winery, supervising their daily activities, training them and handling all administrative work. Malan is also the first black woman to have completed a course on the growth of table grapes.

Farm workers are also encouraged to buy shares in the company. They have access to a medical welfare service and their children can attend the farm’s crèche and primary school. The children who want to continue their education at a junior and high school are transported by Stellar’s school bus.

“What is most important is the improvement of working conditions and opportunities for our workers, as well as the creation of social structures and further education opportunities,” says Rossouw. “Last but not least, to offer them optimism for the future, the possibility of independence and self-employment.”

Earlier in the year Malan met with Transfair in Germany to promote Stellar’s fair trade practices – her first flying experience and overseas visit. At a wine tasting organised to introduce South Africa’s wines to the international market, Maria Malan told Dieter Overath, Transfair’s manager: “Hopefully clients will love and buy our noble and tasty wine. Then more people like me from South Africa will have the opportunity to climb the career ladder -from cleaning lady to business manager.”

Injustices in the global coffee industry brewed up much needed debate, making consumers more aware that their café latte might come at a huge price for small-scale farmers and workers. In South Africa, a leading wine producing country, consumers are also starting to ponder on the true price of the trendy Shiraz in their glass.

Says Rossouw, “Fair Trade raises the consciousness of consumers. They benefit by having the option to buy products which fit their principles. Fair Trade certification assures buyers of the ethical source of the product.”

Stellar Winery carries SKAL organic accreditation. For more information on Stellar Winery, its fair trade or organic farming practises, contact: **Shelagh de Rosenwerth** on shelagh@stellarorganics.com.

More about Fairtrade

The Fairtrade Mark stands for fairness and global social responsibility in international trade. Fairtrade certification commits businesses to stringent criteria designed to foster a just and sustainable market:

Fair Wages: Producers are paid fairly for their products; workers are paid at least that country's minimum wage, and if that's not enough, they must be given a living wage, which enables them to cover basic needs, including food, shelter, education and health care for their families.

Cooperative Workplaces: Cooperatives and producer associations are encouraged as opposed to large-scale manufacturing and sweatshop conditions.

Consumer Education: Companies educate consumers about the importance of purchasing fairly traded products which support living wages and healthy working conditions.

Environmental Sustainability: Fairtrade Organizations encourage producers to engage in environmentally friendly practices which manage and utilize local resources sustainably.

Financial and Technical Support: Fairtrade organizations will, where necessary, provide financial assistance to small producers unable to access finance through conventional methods – banks are often loath to lend money to small farmers or crafters, for instance

Respect for Cultural Identity: Fairtrade companies actively encourage local culture

Public Accountability.

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