

# Environmental care by wine estate

Backsberg Estate proprietor Michael Back believes that a whole new market sector with the emphasis on care, not only for the wine and the consumer, but also care for the environment, is about to open. Exemplifying this is Backsberg reportedly having become the first wine producer in South Africa and one of only three in the world to gain Carbon Neutral status by sequestering its carbon emissions.



Says Back, “Backsberg will now deliver to wine lovers throughout the world, fine wines, individually crafted within our wine making philosophy of producing wines with a high level of ‘drinkability’ which are also Carbon Neutral.”

## Forward thinking

Back, who joined the family business in 1976, is passionate about the environment, believing that each generation is the custodian of the land for a limited period of time only. His forward thinking has already rescued several plant species from extinction by reserving 10% of his land for non-development and preservation of the endangered Fynbos biome.

“Care for the environment means care and concern for succeeding generations. As custodians of the land, it is our duty to understand and recognise potential threats, and to mitigate against them for the benefit of the next generation,” he says.

Backsberg has completed a comprehensive carbon audit initiated to understand the carbon emission consequences of its farming and wine making activities. The carbon audit reviewed all activities from overall energy consumption, to CO<sub>2</sub> emitted during fermentation.

The carbon standard applied at Backsberg follows the Kyoto Protocol on Green House Gas emissions. The scientific nature of the carbon audit allows Backsberg to understand the magnitude of the sequestration solutions it needs to seek and develop, in order to reduce its carbon footprint and maintain a status of carbon neutrality going forward.

## Greening programme

The sequestration solutions developed by Backsberg will involve a greening programme within the nearby village of Klapmuts. This programme will be managed by the internationally respected Jeunesse Park, CEO of Food and Trees for Africa, the non-profit national greening organisation driving the Carbon Standard offset program in South Africa. This collaboration will see Backsberg use the Food and Trees for Africa Carbon Standard logo.

“We are indeed proud to be associated with Food and Trees for Africa,” says Back.

Says Park, “Trees are the most efficient and simple means for us to store carbon, providing us with the air we breathe and absorbing the carbon dioxide we exhale and that is emitted in large quantities by our carbon based society.”

Park was honoured with an International Chevron Conservation Award in California in October last year for her efforts to improve the quality of life for disadvantaged South Africans through natural resource improvements. Since the start of the Public Benefit Organisation 17 years ago, Food and Trees for Africa has distributed over 2.5 million trees throughout South Africa.

While tree planting is crucial to the absorption of greenhouse gas emissions, it is equally important to develop more conservation oriented practices by becoming more energy efficient for long term sustainability.

Backsberg sees tree planting as part of a package of solutions to climate change and is currently either applying or reviewing a number of these solutions. This “package” includes conversion to bio fuel, setting aside land for development of additional biomass, reviewing packaging (especially in terms of glass weight) and the development of methane digester technology.

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