

St Francis Bay lodge earns 'fair trade' label

Rating based on wages, ethics and environmental involvement

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A ST FRANCIS Bay lodge has been endorsed by the prestigious "fair trade" sustainable tourism programme for an unusual suite of innovations ranging from alien brush eradication to sourcing greens from a community vegetable garden.

Announcing the news this week, Fair Trade in Tourism SA (FTTSA) executive director Jennifer Seiff said The Dunes Country House fitted FTTSA's strict check-list of criteria.

These include adherence to fair wages and working conditions for staff, fair distribution of benefits,



JENNIFER SEIFF

ethical business practice and respect for human rights, culture and the environment.

The Dunes' environmental work is underpinned by its commitment to preserving the local coastal fynbos and wetlands – where popular nighttime "frog safaris" are conducted, she said.

"Their involvement in St Francis' continuing alien brush eradication is a demonstration of their concerted environmental effort. Their alien era-

dication programme also provides all the firewood necessary for keeping staff and guests warm during the winter."

The Dunes invests in the surrounding community by buying local goods and supporting local enterprises like Henry's Vegetable Garden, run by resident Henry Maarman on a piece of its land.

Henry's garden is fertilised by The Dunes' newly installed vermi-composter, which comprises hard-working earthworms and a container of compost replenished by all the bio-degradable waste from the lodge. Fresh water is poured over this mulch and the nourishing brew which leaches out is then used to fertilise the veggies.

"Henry provides The Dunes kitchen with home-grown produce for staff and guests to enjoy," Seiff said.

The Dunes kitchen is also guided by the SA Sustainable Seafood Initiative. Compiled by the World Wide Fund for Nature, the project is aimed at raising awareness among consumers about the decline in many of our edible fish and it does this by listing them in different categories.

FTTSA also measures a tourism business's compliance in terms of how it approaches Aids, Seiff noted. "In this regard, The Dunes offers an on-going education programme about HIV/Aids in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. As a further commitment to staff, it invests in skills development including chef training, spa therapy, first aid, fire safety, recycling and conservation."

The Dunes is demonstrating that small operations can lead the way in responsible tourism, Seiff said. "It is showing that this can happen and small but meaningful changes can be made, one step at a time, when sufficient leadership, teamwork and commitment is there."