

SOUTH AFRICA



Cold Mountain Farm Cooperative

Cold Mountain aims to demonstrate sustainable development through indigenous knowledge and agroecology to achieve a holistic and self-sustaining farm eco-system and to enable local communities to achieve greater well-being through economic development, improved nutrition and food sovereignty.

Map

The initiative is located in the south-west of the Western Cape Province of South Africa, an area that was colonised by Dutch settler in the late 1600's. Prior to this era the region was home to San hunter-gatherers and Khoi pastoralists. Over successive centuries monocultural agriculture, intensive grazing practices and introduction of invasive alien plant species have replaced or degraded the natural vegetation and the soils of the area.

The initiative is situated in the winter rainfall area of South Africa, with most rain recorded between the months of May and August. Annual rainfall is approximately 570 mm.



Context



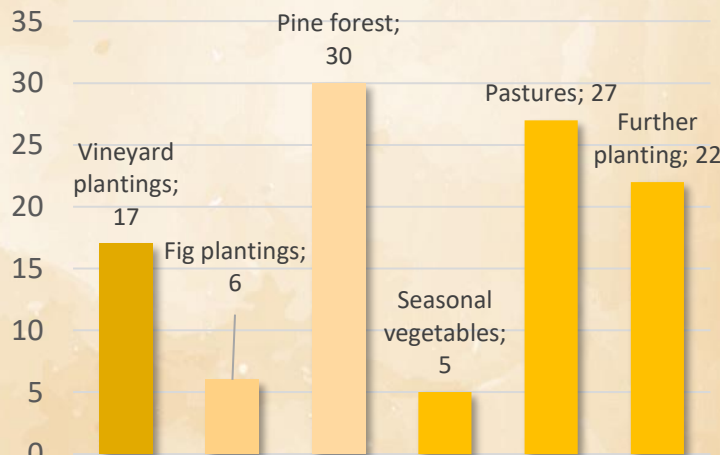
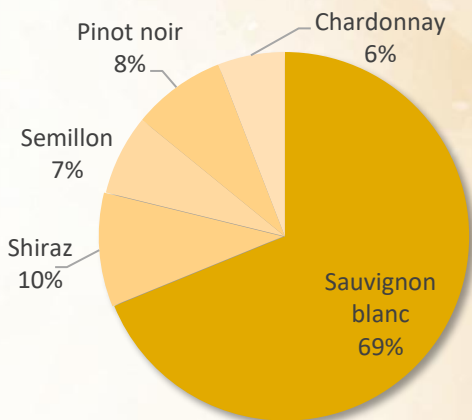
The initiative lies within the local Overstrand Municipality, which is a constituent part of the Overberg District Municipality in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. Arable land in the area is used to produce grapes and other fruits, and as pasturage for dairy and beef cattle and sheep. Most agriculture is highly mechanized. Most people of colour live either in the closer settlements or “townships” on the margins of towns. Unemployment is rife and poverty widespread in the area.



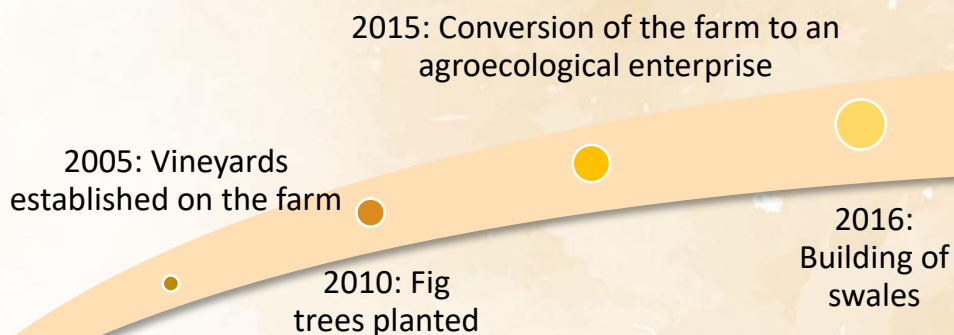
Description

The Cold Mountain Cooperative is a 100% black member-owned business based on agroecological principles that **processes** and **markets organic certified produce** and **wine** produced by its members. In order to support its primary business and achieve its mission, the Cold Mountain Cooperative provides a number of supplementary services to its members and local community including **training** in **organic** and **sustainable production**, provision of **organic farming inputs** to others in the community and providing **support** for the **Overberg organic Participatory Guarantee System**. The Cooperative has been **bottling** wines under the **Brunia brand** since 2017 in a rented cellar.

Practices used by Cold Mountain to improve soil and water management include the establishment of **mulched** and **vegetated buffer zones**, mulching the **vineyards** and **orchards**, using **cereals** and **nitrogen fixing cover crops** across the farm, and extensive construction of **swales** in cultivated lands to enhance infiltration of rainwater and prevent soil erosion.



Trajectory





Results and benefits



Cold Mountain Cooperative has over the **last 5 years** converted the farm from a conventional, chemical based farming system to an **agroecological** and **organic enterprise**. The conversion has come at great cost initially but has shown great results in **qualitative** analysis of the **wine** and **produce**.

Cold Mountain Cooperative provides several supplementary **services** to its members and local community including **training** in **organic** and **sustainable production**, provision of **organic farming inputs** to others in the community and providing **support** for the **Overberg organic Participatory Guarantee System**. There are a now **10 farms** in the PGS network.



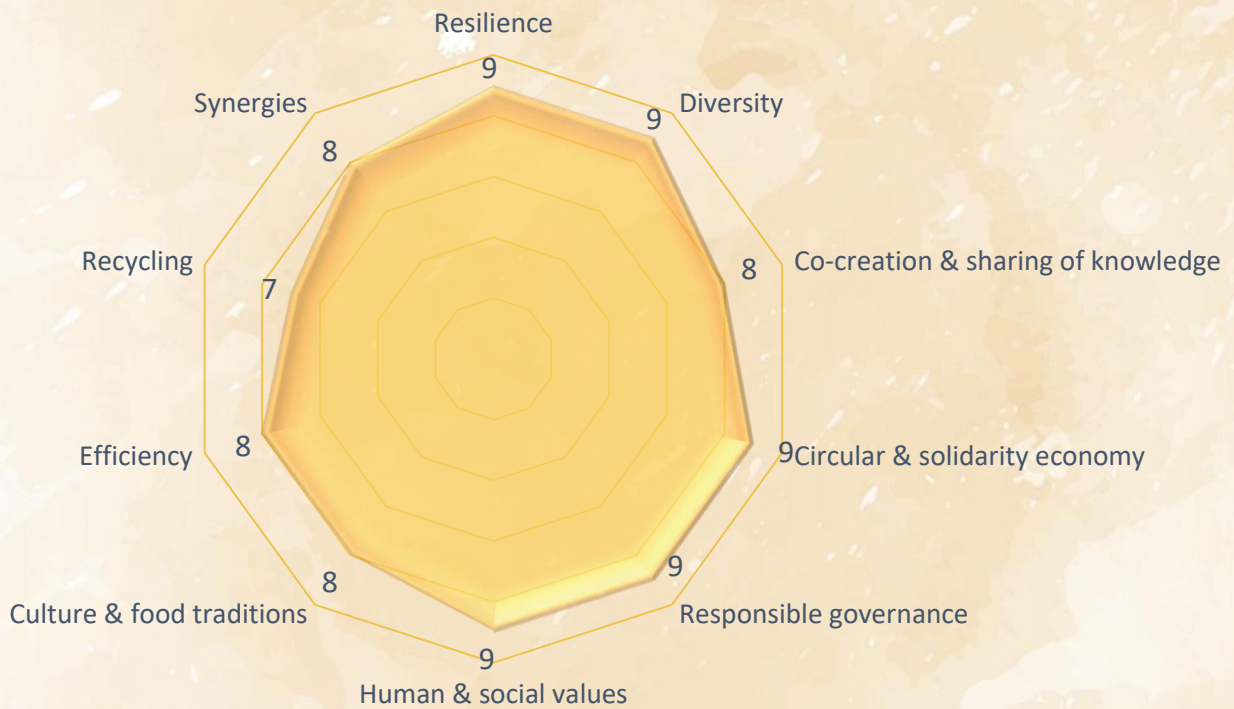
Cold Mountain Cooperative has begun **sustainably harvesting fynbos species** present on the farm as means of **preserving** Fynbos health and **diversifying** farm income streams. Members of the **local indigenous communities** have joined the Cooperative and pick for both **fresh** and **dry markets** locally and abroad.

One of the **PGS member farms** is the 'Die Kop' enterprise in Stanford, which has **32** members, and which is **directly supported** by Cold Mountain farm, which provides **institutional support**, **training** and **access to markets**. The Cooperative also supports the **school** at Die Kop via the NGO 'Food 4 Thought' (F4T). The Cold Mountain Cooperative supports F4T directly and serves on its governing body.



In the **last 4 years** **swales** have been constructed across the farm and **cultivation** has been adapted to following contours to **avoid erosion**. Overall there has been a **gradual increase** of **carbon** to the soil through **compost** additions and **cut and drop** techniques employed on the farm.

Lessons learned & reflected FAO principles



Resilience: 9

Through its land use practices and biodiversity conservation the initiative enhances the resilience of the local ecosystem. It also provides capacity development and other forms of support to the local community that enhance their resilience and support their efforts to achieve greater equity.

Human & social values: 9

The initiative engages with members of the local community based on common values and provides skills development for agroecological production and livelihood enhancement. The business model of the cooperative seeks to achieve greater equity and improve social well-being.

Diversity: 9

The initiative highly values biodiversity in nature and in the production system. Natural resources are conserved, including the indigenous vegetation. The initiative embraces diversity of people and culture.

Culture & food traditions: 8

The initiative produces a range of agroecological food products and supports local community to produce and use agroecologically-produced foods in their diets. The initiative supports the local "Food Sovereignty through Agroecology" programme.

Co-creation & sharing of knowledge: 8

The initiative actively mentors other agroecological producers and values diverse sources of knowledge. These activities take place through the PGS Network and Food 4 Thought.

Efficiency: 8

The farming system uses compost, mulching and microbial stimulants to produce horticultural crops. Nitrogen-fixing cover crops are grown to enhance fertility and swales have been constructed in cultivated lands to enhance infiltration of rainwater and prevent soil erosion.

Synergies: 8

Ecosystem services are maintained by conserving the indigenous vegetation and preventing any pollution of surface or ground water.

Responsible governance: 9

The initiative is a registered Co-operative, and the members democratically elect the directors of the business. The directors are accountable to the other members and report back at general meetings.

Recycling: 7

Plant nutrients are retained on the farm and incorporated into the soils, reducing the economic and environmental costs.

Circular & solidarity economy: 9

The initiative provides access to markets for local agroecological producers, including supermarkets and the export market. This generates greater value for the produce of local farmers and enhances their livelihoods.

Contacts

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The Avaclim project aims to create the necessary conditions for the deployment of agroecology in arid areas.

For more information : www.avaclim.org

Financial partners:



FONDS FRANÇAIS POUR
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