



# SOUTH AFRICA: BOTANICAL CONSERVATION MEETS POVERTY ALLEVIATION

*"Never in man's history has our future been this delicate. We do not have time – we are running out of options and opportunities to restore and conserve what remains of viable, functioning ecosystems. Without urgent intervention, we will change the face of our Earth as we know it, to a point of no-return. We cannot allow this to happen. Not on our watch. For some ecosystems, impacts have resulted in tipping points already being reached – irreversibly so. And while our scientists have worked hard to change policy (with some success, in some parts), this has not necessarily translated into action. Without action, our data, policies and treaties are all meaningless. Conservation requires an urgent re-think and a new approach which will result in tangible, long-lasting outcomes. Several governments require assistance with implementing biodiversity and climate-change targets. Others need to be lobbied (or forced) into action. All these crucial initiatives require global support. **Without action, we will see the continued demise of our planet's finite resources, which will ultimately only compromise our own future on this Earth.**"*



**Odette Curtis-Scott, Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust, South Africa**

One of South Africa's most remarkable and best-kept secrets is the incredible diversity of plant species found in the Cape Floral Kingdom (or the Cape Floristic Region) on the country's Western Cape. One of only six floral kingdoms in the world and unique to this small area, the region supports over 9,000 plant species, 70% of which are found nowhere else on the planet. These include exquisite species such as the king protea (South Africa's national flower) and the exotic pincushion.

South Africa's lowland renosterveld is one of the richest ecosystems in the world, as a result of its extraordinary biodiversity. The renosterveld that we see today is vastly different from that of 300 years ago, however, before large-scale agriculture began to threaten its existence. Now, 95% of lowland renosterveld has been lost and almost all of the remaining habitat fragments are smaller than 80 hectares in size.

Through partnership with the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust, Fauna & Flora International aims to support the conservation of threatened renosterveld habitats within the Overberg District in the Cape Flora reserve. This includes establishing land purchases and legal restrictions, protecting areas from conversion degradation through ploughing, grazing and uncontrolled fires, and assisting conservation through collaboration and incentives with farmers for land stewardship.

The project began in 2011 and since then the founding of the first Renosterveld Reserve, 682 hectares in size, has been established. The first conservation easement, signed in July 2017 for the protection of 200 hectares of renosterveld, is currently in perpetuity.