

The Rooibos Harvest

November 2017

The harvest

Unpredictable weather patterns have a major impact on farmers around the globe, threatening the production of many crops. For the past three years, there has been a severe drought affecting the Southern Africa region. This has major implications, lowering the rooibos production in South Africa and resulting in limited availability of certified rooibos to fulfill demand.

Force Majeure

This has been defined as a 'force majeure' situation; an extraordinary set of circumstances beyond the control of rooibos producers, companies, or UTZ. Therefore, UTZ has announced special measures for the 2017/2018 harvest. Members of the UTZ tea program who pack rooibos for the end-consumer and out of home market may use conventional rooibos for their blends and claim these as UTZ certified under certain restrictions.

These measures are short term and only apply to the 2017/2018 harvest. The amount of non-certified rooibos used cannot exceed 40% of the company's annual rooibos volume claimed as UTZ, and companies should purchase other sustainable certified rooibos if wherever possible.

Companies will pay to UTZ the program fee, that otherwise would have to be paid over the certified volumes, and the premium, that otherwise would have to be paid to the farmers. This money will be re-invested by UTZ in improving the rooibos program in South Africa, specifically focusing on climate adaptation and mitigation. In addition, action is already underway to address the situation, with efforts to bring more rooibos producers into the program and to further develop climate adaptation programs for existing producers.

This follows similar measures that were taken in 2016.

Maintaining long term commitments to sustainability

These measures are designed to ensure companies maintain their commitment to sustainable sourcing, with the ultimate aim of bringing long term benefits to rooibos producers in South Africa. The nature of the rooibos supply chain means that temporarily removing the UTZ label from packaging would be very costly, and is likely to lead to a long term switch away from the sale of UTZ certified rooibos.

UTZ will maintain close contact with all the affected producers and companies throughout this period.

For more information please contact your account manager at UTZ or Cathrien de Liagre Böhl at cathrien.deliagrebohl@utz.org.