

Satsa, SA Tourism's new initiative to highlight importance of carbon offsetting

Satsa and South African Tourism (SA Tourism) have launched a carbon offsetting initiative to create awareness about the need to reduce the tourism industry's carbon footprint. During the recent Satsa 2019 conference, Satsa Eastern Cape deputy chair and owner of Wild Lubanzi Backpackers, Aidan Lawrence told delegates that the tourism industry needs to be planting millions of Spekboom immediately to offset carbon emissions.



Image Supplied.

Spekboom has carbon-offsetting properties and can sequester more than four tonnes of carbon dioxide per year per hectare planted, making it more effective than the Amazon rainforest at removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The initiative comes as South Africa seeks proactively to focus on sustainability as a destination, with the 'flight shaming' movement growing exponentially in influence across the world.

"In Scandinavia, there are projects aimed at shaming people who don't offset the carbon emissions they cause when travelling," said Lawrence.

"The thought was to create awareness in South Africa about the need to reduce carbon footprint from inbound flights. Spekboom, with its miraculous carbon-offsetting properties, was the perfect solution. We hope this initiative will plant the seed on how South African tourism businesses can get practically involved in their own carbon-offset programmes," added Lawrence.

Sustainable industry development

To create awareness about the Spekboom initiative, each delegate at this year's SATSA conference received a cutting of the plant, which is an indigenous succulent found in the Eastern Cape.

Satsa and SA Tourism handed out 600 Spekboom cuttings and will be planting another 5000 plants over the next few months. That will be the mother plant stock to roll out millions of new plants.

"South Africa is the first country in the world to directly address the impact on our environment of flights in and out of our country in the context of flight shaming. There is no limit! You can partner with us to offset all your carbon emissions. If a company wants 500 000 plants, the Spekboom initiative will commit to finding a solution for this to happen," added Lawrence.

Satsa CEO, David Frost says the organisation, as the voice of inbound tourism, has a responsibility to encourage South African businesses to focus on sustainable development. "Globally the Tourism industry accounts for 8% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Each business must take responsibility for its carbon footprint and the impact it has on the environment."

"Responsible and sustainable tourism is vital for a thriving tourism industry, and we all have to play our part in the offsetting of carbon emissions," comments Darryl Erasmus, chief quality assurance officer at SA Tourism. "The initiative by SATSA and SA Tourism to plant 5,000 Spekboom is a further indication of our commitment to ensuring a sustainable tourism industry. While this is just a start, we need to ensure that we do more for the environment."

Tourism stakeholders and other interested parties are invited to showcase their Spekboom projects on SATSA's social media and the newly created [Spekboom Facebook page](#).



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