



MY ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT

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Save and protect Sedgefield's biodiversity

Sedgefield and its surrounding areas are rich in biological diversity, which contributes to its popularity as a residential town and tourism destination. Unfortunately, our environment is extremely sensitive to careless and irresponsible use of the very resources that give it its special character.

As residents, it is our responsibility to always take extra care that our actions do not destroy our diverse sensitive environment. By understanding and minimising our environmental footprint, we can contribute to a more sustainable town and a more sustainable planet. Environmental footprint refers to the impact we have on the environment through our daily activities. It encompasses factors such as the natural resources we consume and the harmful gases or by-products we produce.

An environmental footprint, also known as an ecological footprint, measures the pressure we exert on our environment and planet through factors such as energy usage, consumption patterns, and waste production. We can reduce our footprint by being mindful of our energy use. The generation and the consumption of electricity and fuel are two of the major emitters of carbon into our atmosphere that pollute the environment.

The first step in reducing one's environmental impact is to be more aware of the goods that we consume and the resources we use. We can start by considering the following:

- Choose energy-efficient appliances and consider renewable energy sources.

- Use public transport, lift clubs or walk/cycle whenever possible.
- Buy products with minimal packaging to reduce waste.
- Buy local because it is cheaper to transport and deliver which reduces carbon emissions and pollution.
- Use recyclable bags instead of purchasing plastic bags. It is better for the environment and makes economic sense.
- Support producers that practice sustainable methods.
- Livestock production has a significant environmental impact. Reduce your carbon footprint by eating less meat.

Wise choices

In South Africa, many line fish species are overexploited or have collapsed. Destructive fishing practices, poaching, and unsustainable harvesting of ocean resources cause permanent damage to marine habitats. It is the responsibility of the government to regulate and monitor fishing activities, but it is also the duty of every seafood restaurant, retailer, and consumer to support sustainable and responsible fishing practices. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) established the South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) to inform and educate all participants about sustainable seafood. The colour-coded SASSI list categorises selected South African and imported seafood species according to their conservation status.

The **green group** contains the most sustainable choices from the healthiest and most well-managed populations. These species can absorb current fishing pressure.

The **orange group** includes species that have associated reasons for concern, either because the species is under stress due to overfishing, or the reproductive rate of the species

makes it vulnerable to high fishing pressure. Be mindful of your food choices and consider the implications of irresponsible preferences.

The **red group** includes unsustainable species from collapsed populations or those with extreme environmental concerns and/or inappropriate management. Species that are illegal to catch, buy or sell in South Africa also fall in the red group. If you are unsure about the status of the fish you want to purchase, download the WWF-SASSI App which gives information about the various species and their associated conservation status or related SASSI colour.

Reduce, reuse, recycle

We can reduce our waste footprint by recycling, composting, and minimising single-use plastics. Littering is a national problem and Sedgefield is no exception. Every piece of paper, plastic lid, or oil we drop in the street ends up in our environment and our lagoon which is not only a biodiversity hotspot but also a source of food and recreation. Although we live in a perceived water-rich area, we are prone to droughts. Therefore, we must conserve water by fixing leaks and using water-saving fixtures. Water treatment plants and the distribution of potable water, consume energy and create waste that must be disposed of in an environmentally safe manner. The less water we use, the smaller our impact on the environment.

Wasteful consumption and careless activities increase the land surface needed per person to meet their requirements. Every one of us, wherever we work, live or play should work towards a zero environmental footprint by conserving, restoring, and replacing the natural resources we use every day.

Collectively, minor changes make a substantial difference in reducing our overall impact. Every action counts! By consciously making smarter choices we can contribute to a healthier town and planet and a more sustainable future for all of us.

Reducing our environmental footprint has numerous benefits for our town, the planet, and our well-being. The key advantage is a smaller environmental impact which will protect our ecosystems. By reducing our environmental footprint, we use fewer resources which lowers emissions. Less waste means less pollution. A clean environment contributes to a healthy community. Sustainable practices also involve supporting local businesses and communities, fostering economic resilience and growth, and a reduced environmental footprint.