

# Woolworths commits to WWF Water Balance Programme

As South Africa prepares for National Water Week, Woolworths is working to deliver against its commitments to the WWF Water Balance Programme, a 160 hectare 'water balance' alien vegetation clearance project in 24 Rivers catchment, a tributary of the Berg River, by 2015.



Working with WWF South Africa, farmers and local communities to remove water-thirsty alien vegetation, Woolworths enables hundreds of thousands of litres of water to remain in local rivers each year.

The Woolworths and WWF Water Balance Programme has already eradicated over 50 hectares of alien vegetation, and a further 110 hectares are scheduled to be cleared in the 24 Rivers farming community by 2015. By balancing the water used in Woolworths operations each year with efforts to preserve South Africa's rivers, the company will help conserve the country's water-stressed catchment areas, thus contributing to building South Africa's water secure future.

Water Balance is one of several programmes that WWF and Woolworths are partnering on. The Woolworths Farming for the Future programme has been supported by WWF, and focuses on water efficiency and the proper management of wastewater in the fruit, vegetable, wine and horticulture supply chains. The company is also involved in a Water Stewardship Programme with WWF, allowing corporates and their supply chains to work with local communities to tackle the key risks to water in their areas, particularly in water scarce areas such as Ceres in the Western Cape.

According to Justin Smith, Head of Sustainability at Woolworths, "Woolworths is looking to replicate the success of our current Water Balance and water stewardship initiatives in the farming community of Ceres, specifically in the broader Berg and Palmiet river catchments."

"While Woolworths is the only retailer in South Africa to form part of the WWF's Water Balance Programme, there are opportunities for all types of companies, including other retailers, to show their commitment to saving our water resources," continued Smith.

Christine Colvin, senior manager for WWF'S Freshwater Programmes said: "Only 8% of the land area of South Africa generates more than half of our river flow. This 8%, form our key water source areas. These areas not only supply the catchments and dams downstream, they provide water to the sectors, industries and activities which drive our economy. However, our strategic water source areas are under threat from alien vegetation, mining activities and climate change impacts. In order to protect these areas, and ultimately ensure a water secure future for South Africa, we require strong partnerships, long-term oversight and careful planning."

"WWF partners with companies like Woolworths because corporate water stewardship and investment is crucial in maintaining the health of our water production areas, sustainable businesses and the wellbeing of local communities," said Colvin.

"Water does not come from a tap, a bottle or a dam - which is why we work so hard to make sure it isn't lost in the catchment areas or wasted through inefficient business practices," said Smith.

For more, go to [www.wwf.org.za](http://www.wwf.org.za) and [www.woolworths.co.za](http://www.woolworths.co.za)

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