

# SUSTAINABLE LODGES IN THE KAVANGO-ZAMBEZI TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREA



A PRACTICAL GUIDELINE FOR SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY  
CHAIN MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TOUR OPERATORS



# FUTOURIS INDUSTRY PROJECT “SUSTAINABLE LODGES”

Futouris is a non-profit initiative of the German tourism industry aimed at sustainable development, with a focus on biodiversity conservation, climate protection, socio-cultural responsibility, and poverty reduction. Its members include leading outbound tour operators such as TUI, Gebeco, Thomas Cook and DER Touristik, as well as cruise companies and travel agencies. In cooperation with its members Futouris develops and implements pilot projects and innovations which demonstrate the industry's sense of responsibility and foster sustainable development in tourism destinations around the world. Every two years, Futouris initiates a special industry project. For 2015/16 the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA), Africa's biggest protected area, was selected as the organization's flagship project.

## THE KAVANGO ZAMBEZI TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREA



The KAZA TFCA is a vast multiple land-use area extending over 519,912 km<sup>2</sup> in the basins of the Okavango, Chobe and Zambezi rivers in Southern Africa. It is home to three World Heritage Sites, including the tourism magnets Victoria Falls and Okavango Delta, and hosts Africa's biggest elephant population. The TFCA was established by treaty in 2011 between the governments of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe in order to expand wildlife habitat by linking well preserved biotopes through migration corridors. Another, equally important goal is to boost sustainable socio-economic development for local people, i.a. by promoting responsible tourism. The KAZA TFCA is administered by the KAZA Secretariat which works with different government levels, local communities, the private sector and NGOs that share the same vision.

## GOALS OF THE SUSTAINABLE LODGES PROJECT

In order for tourism to act as a positive force for conservation, it needs to demonstrate solid environmental management and provide tangible benefits for the local population. Lodges are key tourism stakeholders in KAZA and in many other African destinations as they provide not only accommodation, but also catering and numerous activities to tourists. They range from basic wilderness camps to sophisticated luxury establishments. Many lodges are already committed to sustainability goals, but in view of the numerous challenges that conservation in KAZA is facing, such as poaching, the number and impact of sustainably operating lodges need to be increased. The Futouris project has contributed to making this an industry-driven, incentive-based approach by incorporating Sustainable Lodges into Futouris members' product portfolios – allowing the tour operators at the same time to “green” their own supply chains.





## PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

Futouris industry projects are designed to develop and test exemplary solutions that demonstrate corporate responsibility in the tourism sector and have the potential to mainstream sustainability both in tourism destinations and within companies themselves. The focus of the KAZA Sustainable Lodges project has been on product development and the selection of suppliers in a tourism destination that is characterized as a fragile conservation area with widespread rural poverty, while at the same time having prime tourism attractions and enjoying international attention. Based on the project's results and experiences as well as on previous work in this field, guidelines are developed how tour operators can proactively "green" their supply chains by systematically preferring committed suppliers. Prime target groups are senior managers, CSR officers and product managers of tour operators, but also other tourism professionals as well as conservation and development organisations wishing to work with tourism as a tool for sustainable development.



# TOUR OPERATORS AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY



Tour operators are key actors in international tourism. Not only do they package all ingredients of a tourist trip, large corporations often own various other companies along the tourism supply and distribution chains, such as airlines, hotels, travel agencies and reservation systems. Thus, they represent an enormous **market power**. Their purchase decisions can strongly influence suppliers and entire destinations. For instance, the Futouris members involved in the Sustainable Lodges project cover 57 % of the German outbound market.

In 2002, the Tour Operators' Initiative (TOI), in cooperation with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) identified the following five fields of action for tour operators striving to be sustainable:

- **Product development and management**
- **Supply chain management**

- **Cooperation with destinations**
- **Customer relations**
- **Internal management.**<sup>1</sup>

Apart from greenhouse gas emissions caused by long-haul transportation, the impacts of international tourism occur primarily in the destinations. Tour operators can influence this by the way they design their products and how they choose their suppliers. Product development and supply chain management are thus of primary importance when it comes to corporate responsibility. What happens along its supply chain is increasingly seen as a company's responsibility. Failure to do so may entail significant **reputational risks**. In addition, large companies in particular may wish to "give back" to the destinations where they operate, thus improving stakeholder relations and helping to **safeguard their own product base**, such as wildlife or vibrant local cultures.

However, internal management is not to be neglected either. It is not a good idea to ask business partners and customers to be environmentally friendly and socially responsible if the company itself does not practice what it preaches! In addition, informing customers and encouraging them to travel sustainably is also extremely important. How tourists behave during their trips and what travel decisions they take in the first place are decisive for the success of sustainable tourism.







# SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT: WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

Before getting started, a few preconditions for “greening” supply chains need to be taken into account: In order to ensure the desired commitment of suppliers, it is important for a tour operator to bring a steady and non-negligible **volume of business** to them. This is a significant incentive, for example if a business partner needs to make investments into environmental technologies or staff capacity building in order to be eligible as a sustainable supplier. Given their size, Futouris member companies are in a good position to achieve this, even though Southern Africa may not be among their most important destinations. Secondly, supply chain initiatives must be aware that sustainability-related knowledge is necessary on both sides in order to develop sensible concepts and effectively implement sustainable measures. Thirdly, **trustful relationships** must

exist or be developed between both parties that are built on mutual respect and fair business relations, incl. pricing and cancellation conditions.<sup>2</sup>

In the Tour Operator’s Initiative for Sustainable Tourism “Handbook for Sustainable Supply Chain Management” (2004) three major steps are described:

1. **Establish a sustainable supply chain policy and management system**
2. **Support suppliers in reaching sustainability goals**
3. **Integrate sustainability criteria into suppliers’ contracts.**

## CHECKLIST FOR SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT (SSCM)

### 1. Develop a Sustainable Supply Chain Policy and Management System

- 1.1 Create a clear **company policy** on sustainability and co-ordinate implementation across relevant departments through an assigned team led by a CSR manager.
- 1.2 Conduct a **baseline assessment** of a suitable sample of suppliers against criteria defined in the sustainability policy and identify priority areas for improvement.
- 1.3 Prepare, implement and communicate an **action plan** with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-specific) targets.
- 1.4 Regularly **monitor** and **report** on progress through appropriate indicators, meetings with relevant individuals and regular third-party verified reports on sustainability performance.

### 2. Support Suppliers in Reaching Sustainability Goals

- 2.1 **Raise awareness** on sustainability issues amongst suppliers through clear, targeted messages and highlight the importance of sustainability performance.
- 2.2 Provide suppliers with technical support and **capacity building** on support on actions to improve sustainability performance.
- 2.3 **Offer incentives** such as preferential contracting, promotional opportunities, awards and events to sustainable suppliers to recognise and reward them for environmental, social and economic improvements

### 3. Integrate sustainability criteria into suppliers’ contracts and preferentially contract suppliers that meet those criteria





*Nkasa Lupala Tented Lodge, Namibia*

In addition to the TOI guidelines, Leeds Metropolitan University developed a list of tools that are useful in implementing sustainable supply chain management for tour operators, for example:

- **Standard setting and use of certification schemes** (see following chapter)

- **Performance monitoring** through checklists, special surveys and through customer satisfaction questionnaires
- **Partnerships**, such as investment assistance
- **Avoidance or deselection of suppliers** that do not meet basic requirements.

## USING SUPPLIER CHECKLISTS: THE EXAMPLE OF GREEN PEARLS

In many destinations there are no certification systems or the number of suitable certified businesses is too low. In this case it makes sense to develop one's own standard or checklist. An example is Futouris member Green Pearls, an online marketing platform that has specialised in responsible hotels and lodges around the world which are carefully selected for the quality and sustainability of their offers. In order to be marketed by Green Pearls each hotel has to fill in a checklist of 46 criteria in 13 fields, ranging from company policies to resource consumption and cultural commitment.

It must be noted, however, that Green Pearls is not a certifier. The checklists are filled in by the hotels themselves. Green Pearls does conduct site visits for verification, but for hotels in long-haul destinations this can only be done on occasion. In case a hotel does have a certificate it is used as additional evidence.

Source: [www.green-pearls.com](http://www.green-pearls.com)





# SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT IN THE SUSTAINABLE LODGES PROJECT

All Futouris project partners have CSR policies in place, albeit to varying degrees. In most cases, SSCM is an element of these policies, but implementation appears to be incipient or unsystematic. However, as part of their membership with Futouris, the tour operators have pledged to change this. They intend to:

- Make their existing SCM more sustainable as a way to generate more benefits to conservation and the local population in their destinations;
- Increase the share of sustainable products in their portfolios;
- Increase sales of sustainable products by making them more visible to customers and sales agents in booking and distribution systems.

The project was conceived in a way that the tour operators could use the KAZA TFCA as an **initial test case for greening their supply chains in a model destination** by

- a) Analysing the current product portfolio and demand patterns of the operators in the area so as to develop proposals that would fit these structures;
- b) Identifying sustainable suppliers, based on a pre-defined set of criteria (see chapter on "The use of certification for the Sustainable Lodges project").

The CSR managers of the tour operators, who are integral parts of Futouris' work, acted as "door-openers", but the crucial step was to get the **product managers** of the partner companies on board and have their full support and understanding of the project's objectives. Product managers are the ones who maintain the relationships with suppliers and who can

best judge the viability of a new or modified tourism product in the market place. Furthermore, it is important to know that product managers of large outbound tour operators do not necessarily work directly with companies at the end of the supply chain, but usually contract incoming agencies or ground handlers as intermediaries. Incoming agencies have an even better knowledge of local conditions and sometimes have a strong influence on how individual suppliers are being selected.

Thus, as a first step desk research of print and online catalogues showed which tours and lodges the tour operators had on offer in the KAZA region and in Southern Africa in general. An initial series of interviews with the product managers were held to discuss the structure of their product portfolio and identify opportunities and possible bottlenecks from the tour operators' point of view. They explained certain product choices, e.g. why Zambia had been left out of itineraries due to yellow fever vaccination requirements, or why certain lodges were too small in size to be included in a group tour of a larger operator. Comfort and price levels were additional considerations. Futouris operators mostly use medium- to upscale accommodation, but rarely luxury lodges. All these points were further discussed during a one-day **stakeholder workshop in Germany**.

This meeting yielded important results which were later shared during the main multi-stakeholder workshop in Victoria Falls. The initial workshop with the tour operators was also used to reach a consensus regarding sustainability and quality criteria for lodges in general.

Through **ongoing communication** with the product managers certain lodges and

areas of the KAZA region were identified which were of interest to the tour operators or in which they saw potential. It turned out that some lodges already carried a sustainability certificate, but others along interesting routes did not. Subsequently, these establishments were contacted and sensitized to become Sustainable Lodges, with a major incentive being the prospective integration into the product portfolios of large German tour operators. The creation and distribution of a promotional brochure (with funding from the KAZA Secretariat) listing Sustainable Lodges and itineraries as well as other public activities at the 2016 International Tourism Exchange in Berlin (ITB) were additional incentives.

An important circumstance which greatly supported the objectives of the project has been Futouris' and its members' endeavour to commit themselves as **private sector partners for international development cooperation**. Their work in Africa's greatest conservation area was a welcome example for concrete action which was presented at a panel discussion with the tour operators' CEOs at the 2016 ITB Convention and paved the way for the necessary implementation in the product management departments.

In the final phase of the project the product managers were accompanied in the concrete integration of Sustainable Lodges into their supply chains. A final workshop with CSR and product managers ensured that everyone was on the same page regarding implementation and the continuation of the project in the future.



Planning workshop with product managers and CSR representatives

As a result, the following types of SSCM measures have been implemented by the participating Futouris members:

1. **Free advertisement for the KAZA TFCA** as a conservation area and sustainable tourism destinations
2. **Using the KAZA logo to mark Sustainable Lodges** in travel catalogues for individual booking and in package tours
3. **Create a new sustainable package tour** through the KAZA area
4. **Implement SSCM as part of a broader CSR or Fair Trade management** that is certified or formally recognised.<sup>4</sup>

## CONCRETE ACTION

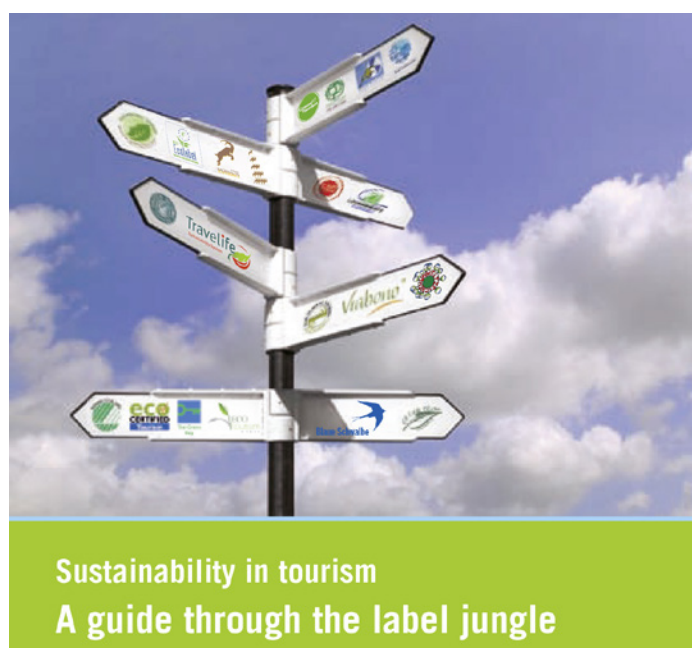
**Thomas Cook** decided to integrate an advertorial, free of charge, into its catalogue informing about the KAZA idea and tourism highlights of the destination as well as Thomas Cook's commitment to the Sustainable Lodges project. The advertisement was also used to point out on which pages in the catalogue sustainable lodges booking options could be found, thus encouraging Thomas Cook clients to support the project by choosing a sustainable lodge for their next holiday.





# CERTIFICATION AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

A key challenge when “greening” one’s supply chain is the sheer amount and **complexity of information** that is required to judge to what degree suppliers around the world are environmentally and socially responsible – in addition to offering the right product and quality. This type of assessment also requires sufficient **sustainability expertise** on the part of a tour operator’s product managers or buyers. Another challenge is to verify the information that has been provided by suppliers, e.g. in the form of checklists. While smaller tour operators may know many of their suppliers personally, larger ones are certainly not in that position. They often use incoming agencies for this purpose, but in any case both staff time and expertise are necessary for SSCM.



A way to solve this dilemma is to delegate the task of assessment and verification to specialized organisations that have the necessary expertise and can certify companies whose sustainability claims have been found to be true. Certificates, labels and seals are widespread in almost any sphere of production and consumption, some obligatory (such as hygienic requirements of food), some voluntary (such as Fair Trade), and serve as an **indispensable orientation** for both consumers and business partners in an increasingly globalised world. The success of organic food, for example, would not have been possible without certification. Such certificates have the additional advantage that their costs are usually borne by the company or producer

of a product that has been certified or by public subsidies and volunteer work – as is often the case with sustainability labels.<sup>5</sup>

But how do we know whether a sustainability certificate is trustworthy itself? In tourism alone there are over 160 certificates worldwide that claim to reliably identify sustainable, environmentally friendly or socially responsible companies or products.<sup>6</sup> This so-called “label jungle” confuses travelers and professionals alike and often makes them disregard certified offers altogether. But this has long been recognised as a problem and as a reaction an internationally acknowledged standard has been developed, the **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria** (GSTC). The GST Council is a broad coalition of tourism companies, industry associations and NGOs as well as the World Tourism Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme. It has developed an extensive list of minimum criteria for hotels, tour operators and entire destinations that individual certification schemes have to cover in order to become GSTC-recognised, -approved or -accredited. These criteria are grouped around four pillars:

- **Effective sustainability planning**
- **Maximising social and economic benefits for the local community**
- **Enhancing cultural heritage**
- **Reducing negative impacts to the environment.**<sup>7</sup>

So far, GSTC has recognised 26 certification schemes for hotels and/or tour operators and three schemes for destinations.<sup>8</sup> “Recognised” means that the content of these certification systems complies with the GSTC minimum criteria or goes beyond them. It does not look at the organisation itself or its processes and procedures, especially regarding auditing and verification. This is assessed at the second step, called “approval”, or, more rigorously, at the third step “accreditation”, which has just been launched. **Transparency, impartiality and competence** are key requirements here. There is an international norm for the assessment and accreditation of certification systems, ISO 17065, that GSTC is using as a guideline. So far, only three schemes have been officially approved by the GSTC.

There are also some other organisations that have conducted evaluations of sustainable tourism certification schemes. All have used similar key criteria. The most comprehensive study was done by the British organisation Totem Tourism in 2013. It identified 20 international “top” certificates, many of which are also GSTC-recognised, but detected significant weaknesses in 40% of the analysed systems.<sup>9</sup> A recent study in Germany revealed that there are few “black sheep” regarding transparency and verification procedures, but that requirements for certification are sometimes rather limited and not demanding enough, especially regarding social issues.<sup>10</sup> Simpler and more descriptive assessments of international tourism eco-labels have been published by DestiNet and by a

consortium of Austrian, Swiss and German NGOs. Apart from Europe, the most developed sustainable tourism labels can be found in Australia, South Africa, Costa Rica and some other Latin American countries, mostly for accommodation and local tour agencies. There are two high-profile and GSTC-recognised certification schemes that were especially developed for outbound tour operators: Travelife and TourCert.<sup>11</sup>



## CONCRETE ACTION

Futouris member **Gebeco** is an outbound tour operator who has undergone certification by TourCert for its comprehensive CSR management. In order to receive the TourCert label, the following management elements must be implemented: Mission statement regarding sustainability, sustainability assessment, improvement programme, appointment of a CSR manager, structured and public reporting, 3rd party audit. In terms of performance TourCert covers issues such as environmental management with a focus on climate impacts, human rights, labour practices, fair trade relations and local value generation as well as customer communication. Sustainable supply chain management is an important part of the requirements. Certified tour operators must regularly check their incoming agencies, contract hotels and guides for their sustainability performance.



Electric safari vehicle, Chobe Game Lodge, Botswana



Some tourism companies use sustainability or environmental guidelines/certificates that are not tourism-specific, such as the UN Global Compact for corporate responsibility or the European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) that focus more on company strategies, management processes and reporting as a basis for sustainable performance. These sys-

tems are demanding because of their holistic approach. Transparency and continuous improvement are key elements of EMAS, for example. High quality certification schemes for sustainable tourism have taken this into account, thus combining the evaluation of a company's performance and its management processes.

## QUICK CHECK - WHAT ARE QUALITY CRITERIA FOR SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS?

1. Broad range of criteria (ecologic, socio-cultural, quality)
2. Demanding criteria and compulsory minimum criteria
3. Mixture of performance- and process-related criteria
4. Continuous improvement of sustainability performance required
5. Transparency of criteria and procedures
6. On-site verification by independent, competent auditors
7. Credible and independent support organisation or advisory council
8. GSTC approval or recognition <sup>12</sup>

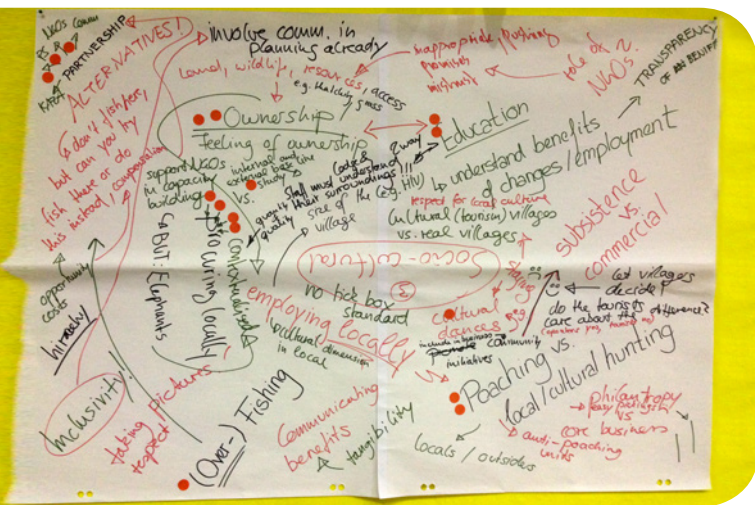
**Whether certified sustainable tourism offers are more expensive than non-sustainable or non-certified products remains a matter of debate.** It is certainly true that buying organic produce or paying staff better wages leads to higher costs, but on the other hand saving energy, having more committed employees or purchasing local services may also save money or lead to higher quality and productivity. Certification itself represents additional costs, but these are often moderate or even minimal due to subsidies or volunteer work, such as in the case of Namibia. Empirical evidence for this has

been provided, among others by a study commissioned by the VDR, the Association of German Travel Managers, in 2014. In it the author compared the average prices of certified and non-certified hotels (of the same categories) in different German cities and found their rack rates almost identical. In most cities certified hotels were slightly more expensive, in others they were about the same or even cheaper.





# THE USE OF CERTIFICATION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE LODGES PROJECT



Results of a participatory workshop on socio-cultural sustainability

So how has the approach laid out in the previous chapter been implemented in the Sustainable Lodges flagship project? The first step was to look at the particular conditions and requirements of sustainable tourism in the Kavango-Zambezi TFCA. This was done by analysing management plans, by interviewing key stakeholders from the conservation and tourism sectors as well as representatives of local community interests, and, most importantly, by conducting a **multi-stakeholder workshop** in one of KAZA's tourism hotspots, Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. Supporting biodiversity conservation and contributing to local community development were identified as key benefits that were expected from sustainable tourism in the area. Thus, a Sustainable Lodge should predominantly fulfill the following criteria:

**Exkursus: Sustainable transportation** was not regarded as a priority issue, firstly because it would have been beyond the project's scope; secondly because in the case of KAZA it is of minor importance compared to the challenges of biodiversity conservation and local community development. However, wildlife tourism in Southern Africa does contribute to global warming as it is largely based on long-haul flights and local transport by all-terrain safari vehicles and small aircraft. But this situation is difficult to change and leaves few other alternatives than compensation by high-quality carbon-offsetting.

for more detail on this, see: Strasdas, W. (2012): Ecotourism and the Challenge of Climate Change - Vulnerability, Responsibility and Mitigation Strategies. In: Bricker, K. et al. (2012): Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism: Transitioning into the New Millennium. Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Boston

- In the **environmental field**, contribution to biodiversity conservation, resource conservation (water, energy, waste reduction) and minimizing pollution are required. This must be sustained by some sort of environmental management system, not necessarily a standardized one. Environmental communication/education of guests, staff and local partners is an additional requirement.
- Contribution to **socio-economic development** in KAZA is even more important in order to create acceptance of extensive conservation areas. This includes fair working conditions (incl. staff qualification and career development), leading to higher retention of staff, as well as the creation of local benefits through local recruiting and local supply chains as much as possible. Overall, businesses must work in cooperation with local communities and respect their traditional ownership of the natural resources as exemplified by the Communal Conservancies in Namibia.

There was also a broad consensus that sustainability claims of lodges should be systematically assessed and verified on-site by independent 3rd party auditors. Thus, as a second step, certification organisations already active in the region were identified. Southern Africa is quite developed in this regard. Botswana and Namibia have national certification schemes for environmental/sustainable tourism with a significant number of certified businesses. Initially, this was not the case in the other three KAZA countries, but in the course of the project Green Tourism, a British certification organisation, started to certify accommodation businesses in Zimbabwe.



Furthermore, a regional multi-stakeholder network, the **Sustainable Tourism Certification Alliance Africa** ("The Alliance") has pioneered the harmonisation of sustainable tourism standards in Africa since 2014. This largely coincided with the requirements stipulated for Sustainable Lodges in the KAZA TFCA. The Alliance is led by an Executive Committee of African sustainable tourism practitioners and certification bodies. Its secretariat is hosted by Fair Trade Tourism, based in South Africa, the first African certification organization to gain GSTC recognition. Fair Trade Tourism has begun to expand into other African countries that did not yet have a national certification system and to build formal partnerships with countries that did, in particular with Eco-awards Namibia and Botswana Ecotourism.

An individual assessment of the certification schemes was necessary since only Fair Trade Tourism is GSTC recognized.



The other systems were assessed against the GSTC criteria (incl. transparency and verification procedures) and the additional local requirements that had been elaborated in the workshop. The assessment results can be summarized as follows:



**Eco-awards Namibia** is rooted in the country's tourism industry as well as in the conservation community. It uses independent volunteer auditors and a board of experts for final verification and classification (1 to 5 Flowers depending on the achieved score). Traditionally, this scheme is very strong regarding environmental criteria. Socio-economic sustainability aspects were significantly enhanced in the course of the project, to the point that Eco-awards Namibia's highest tier (5 Flowers) is now recognized by Fair Trade Tourism as offering a Fair Trade holiday. In order to qualify as a Sustainable Lodge, businesses must have achieved at least a level of 3 Flowers under the new standard (at least 70% of criteria fulfilled). Lodges that have achieved these levels in KAZA show strong commitment to community development.



Participatory standard development for Sustainable Lodges

## CONCRETE ACTION: BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE NKASA LUPALA LODGE, NAMIBIA

Nkasa Lupala Lodge does not just have a certificate. Having achieved 5 Flowers, the highest level of Eco-awards Namibia, honours the Micheletti family's tireless commitment to conservation and local communities which has been an integral part of their business since its foundation. As a joint venture between the members of the Wuparo Conservancy and private investors, Nkasa Lupala operates in close cooperation with the local community, has created jobs and reverses a significant percentage of their annual net revenue to conservation. As part of their extensive environmental strategy, Nkasa Lupala uses 100 per cent renewable energies, has improved its water use practices and implements a solid waste policy around the three "R's" of reducing, reusing and recycling.

*"When in 2010 we started the project of Nkasa Lupala Tented Lodge, we believed that the only way of doing it was following the principles of sustainable tourism. This was just a natural decision for us. Since the official launch of KAZA we have seen changes in the region. Around 2.5 million people live in the KAZA area and today, from the government to the local traditional authorities, they have all understood very clearly what the goals of the KAZA TFCA are. This makes our life easier because now we speak the same language! The implementation of the Futouris concept in our region will benefit the local tourism industry and consequently have a positive impact on the lives of rural communities."*

Simone Micheletti, lodge owner

Source: [www.nkasalupalalodge.com](http://www.nkasalupalalodge.com)



is strongest for its environmental sustainability criteria, but in addition has important requirements regarding socio-economic benefits to local communities. The scheme is in the process of gaining GSTC recognition and is acknowledged by Fair Trade Tourism as providing Fair Trade

holidays in its highest tier (labelled "ecotourism"). In order to qualify as a Sustainable Lodge, businesses must have achieved at least the "Green+" level, that is it must have gone beyond the scheme's mandatory criteria (69 out of 140). A certain weakness of Botswana Ecotourism is its 2nd party verification procedure, that is auditing is carried out by the Botswana Tourism organisation itself.

## CONCRETE ACTION: BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE CHOBE GAME LODGE, BOTSWANA

The renowned Chobe Game Lodge has been a trailblazer for responsible tourism in Northern Botswana. Consequently it has been awarded with Ecotourism Botswana's highest certification level. At Chobe Game Lodge sustainability translates directly into an enhanced visitor experience. The lodge offers its guests a revolutionary safari in the only fully operational electric safari vehicle fleet in Africa, complemented by the first solar panel powered safari boats. Guests can enjoy their sundowner with a view over the Chobe river from the recycled plastic-timber deck.

At Chobe Game Lodge staff is considered family – creating opportunities for women in senior roles within the tourism industry making up the only all-female guiding team in Africa. The lodge also runs a successful Youth Trainee Development Program training young Botswana in all departments creating opportunities for over 170 youngsters without work in the local region. This demonstrates the importance of generating pride among staff and in the local community, both for personalised customer services and effective conservation.

Source: [www.chobegamelodge.com](http://www.chobegamelodge.com)



**Green Tourism's** criteria are only partially public and the scheme has not been recognised by the GSTC. The organisation's certification system is strong in terms of environmental and management criteria, but rather weak regarding

social sustainability, especially when considering its application in an African context. Verification is done by 3rd party on-site visits. In order to qualify as a Sustainable Lodge, businesses must have achieved the scheme's Silver or Gold level (over 65% of maximum score measuring 60 core criteria, which must include those relating to socio-cultural issues and local procurement). However, since Green Tourism is still in a pilot phase in Zimbabwe and plans to amend its standard, it should be re-evaluated after 2016.



**Fair Trade Tourism (FTT):** While the organisation's environmental criteria are basic, its major strength lies in its well elaborated and highly demanding socio-economic criteria. Furthermore it

practices a particularly strict 3rd party assessment with completely independent auditors. FTT is a leading networking organisation for sustainable tourism in Southern Africa and internationally and certifies tourism products in South Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar and Tanzania. In KAZA the Fair Trade Holiday Label is available through FTT's partners Eco-awards Namibia and Botswana Ecotourism.





*Chobe Game Lodge's all-female guiding team!*

## EXCURSUS: WHAT IS FAIR TRADE TOURISM?

Fair Trade is best known for its labelled food products, such as coffee, tea or bananas. Consumer awareness of Fair Trade as a certificate and brand is high in many Western European countries and in North America. It is broadly defined as "... a trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers – especially in the South" (World Fair Trade Organization). Those same principles can be applied to tourism. In fact, Fair Trade principles should be a key element of sustainable supply chain management.

The organisation FTT certifies tourism products (such as accommodation, local tours or entire packages), but not companies per se. However, in order to be eligible to sell Fair Trade products, a company must be approved by FTT by signing a Fair Trade Code of Conduct. Tour operators certified by Travelife or TourCert are automatically approved. A package tour may be labeled and sold as a Fair Trade Holiday if at least 50% of the bed nights are spent in Fair Trade accommodation.

The Fair Trade Code of Conduct for Fair Trade Holidays consists of a checklist of 15 criteria under the following headings:

- **We manage our business fairly, transparently and sustainably.**
- **We have fair supplier relations.**
- **We are transparent with our customers.**
- **We actively support Fair Trade Tourism.**

Source: Fair Trade Tourism, [www.fairtrade.travel](http://www.fairtrade.travel)

In the course of the Sustainable Lodges project incoming agency African Travel Concept (ATC) signed the Fair Trade Code of Conduct. ATC is the incoming operator for Futouris members TUI and Gebeco for Southern Africa.





As a result, businesses marketed by participating Futouris operators as Sustainable Lodges in the form of individual bookings or add-on stays must be certified by one of the schemes listed above and must have reached the defined minimum level. For the purpose of the Futouris project, owing to its relatively short duration, lodges that are certified, but

have not reached the necessary level have been marked as “in transition” or as “committed to sustainability”. The “in transition” status will only be granted until the end of 2016. By then, a lodge must be either fully certified or will be regarded as non-certified. In addition to their individual certificates Sustainable Lodges were allowed by the KAZA Secretariat to carry the KAZA logo as an umbrella label, thus strengthening the joint standard, regional identity and the KAZA brand.

## CONCRETE ACTION:

In most cases the Futouris tour operators have strict guidelines concerning the appearance of external logos in their catalogues. An important achievement of the project was to allow the inclusion of the KAZA logo into all catalogues to mark Sustainable Lodges and thus highlight them as a preferred choice for booking. This was done for individual booking (Thomas Cook/Neckermann, TUI, DERTour/Meiers Weltreisen) and in package tours (TUI).



In order for a product to qualify as a Sustainable KAZA Itinerary, at least 50% of all bed nights of such a tour must be provided by fully certified Sustainable Lodges. However, given the high number of Sustainable Lodges in the core tourism area of the KAZA TFCA (Victoria Falls, Chobe National Park, the Okavango Delta, Namibia's Zambezi Province), it is recommended that in the future Sustainable Itineraries carrying the KAZA logo should include at least 80% of all bed nights in fully certified Sustainable Lodges. As a major result of the project a model itinerary that exclusively consists of Sustainable Lodges

with two variations (tar road and requiring 4x4 vehicles) was developed in cooperation with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF Namibia). The trip took into account already established tourism routes, but also intends to bring more wildlife viewing business to KAZA's Wildlife Dispersal Areas, migration corridors aiming to spread and increase the population of important animal species throughout the TFCA. It is hoped that by creating tourism opportunities in these areas, local people have an incentive to protect wildlife rather than seeing it as a threat to their properties and agricultural lands.









# RESULTS AND KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE PROJECT

## PROJECT RESULTS

- ✓ More than 60 certified lodges in the KAZA region, of which 30 got certified during the Sustainable Lodges project by one of the regional and international partner organisations
- ✓ Non-certified lodges which are already part of Futouris tour operators' product portfolios were sensitized.
- ✓ A model sustainable itinerary through the KAZA TFCA was developed, striving to bring tourism opportunities to Wildlife Dispersal Areas.
- ✓ A promotional brochure was developed, highlighting the Sustainable Lodges standard, the location of lodges and the model itinerary.
- ✓ Futouris members TUI, Thomas Cook/Neckermann and DERTour/Meiers Weltreisen have highlighted certified lodges in their catalogues as individually bookable accommodation or add-on stays.
- ✓ Futouris tour operator Gebeco has developed a sustainable private tour through Namibia and KAZA.
- ✓ Futouris tour operator Thomas Cook provided catalogue space with a KAZA project background story and information about the lodges in the form of an advertorial.

## CONCRETE ACTION

**Gebeco**  
Gesellschaft für  
internationale Begegnung  
und Kooperation

Gebeco has developed a new private tour that features a selection of Sustainable Lodges. The trip goes from the Namibian capital of Windhoek via Etosha National Park and through Namibia's Zambezi Province (the former Caprivi Strip) to Chobe National Park (Botswana) and Hwange National Park (Zimbabwe), ending in Victoria Falls. Within the KAZA region all 10 nights will be spent in Sustainable Lodges, most of which are fully certified (one is "in transition"). The tour is an exclusive trip in the upper price segment and is only published online. It offers guests a true KAZA experience and, depending on the demand, will hopefully pave the way for regular sustainable package tours in Gebeco's 2018 catalogue.





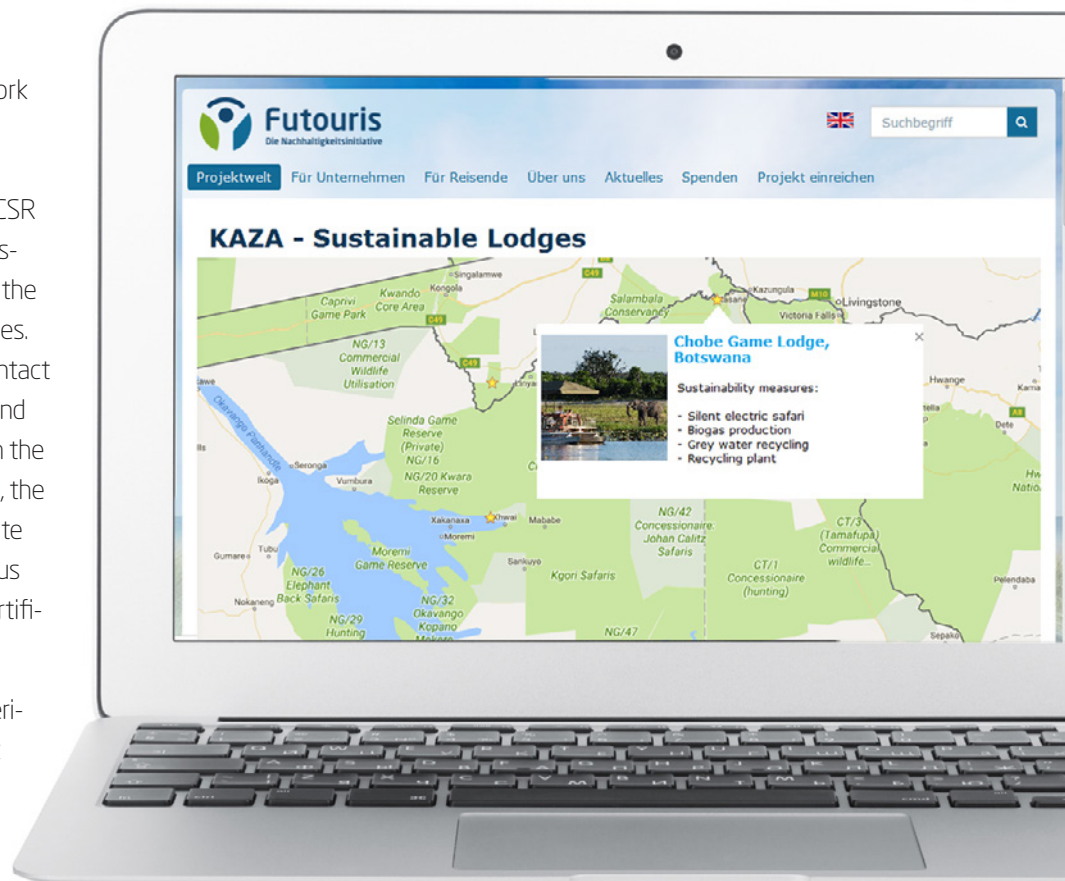
## KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE PROJECT

- With few exceptions, sustainability is not yet a part of the supply chain management of large tour operators. Some CSR-related activities aiming at suppliers do exist, but they tend to be isolated and unsystematic. Price and quality considerations usually prevail over environmental and social concerns and have to be met first. However, Futouris has identified this as a shortcoming and is working with its members on solutions.
- **Product managers are key** to actually get sustainable offers into catalogues. CSR managers can facilitate this process. Getting CEOs to publicly **express commitment** to a flagship project helps even more. There is a growing understanding in the industry that sustainable tourism has the potential to greatly support both conservation and development goals.
- Working in a **“charismatic” destination** such as the Kavango-Zambezi
- TFCA helps create international attention and commitment. This may not work as well in lesser known destinations.
- **Existing business ties** and internal management structures of tour operators should not be underestimated. Product managers often have clear instructions what they can do and what they cannot do. Thus, it may be a longer process to make supply chain management more sustainable and to exchange unsustainable for sustainable suppliers.
- Depending on the size of the tour operator and the type of products offered, e.g. individual tailor-made journeys vs. package tours, the **accommodation size** is of relevance, as many large operators require a minimum number of rooms for an accommodation to be considered as a new supplier. In a region like KAZA which is characterized by many small-scale lodges, this can be a challenge.
- Simpler accommodation, such as campgrounds or huts, is not interesting to mainstream tour operators, nor are remote locations that are difficult to reach. These need to be developed in cooperation with **special-interest** or “adventure” **operators** who may act as pioneers in destinations like Zambia or Angola.
- **Connecting sustainability certification to international markets** (in this case tour operators) represents a significant incentive for local accommodation businesses to get committed and certified.
- Working with **internationally recognised certification organisations** in the destinations and using their local expertise and networks saves resources, avoids “re-inventing the wheel” and creates a potential win-win situation for all stakeholders involved.

## PROSPECTS

The Futouris office will continue to work with the participating tour operators on further advancing the Sustainable Lodges project through the companies' CSR managers. The goal is to create more Sustainable Itineraries and package tours in the KAZA region in upcoming catalogue cycles. Futouris will also continue to act as a contact point between its interested members and the KAZA TFCA by maintaining ties with the KAZA Secretariat. In very practical terms, the Futouris office will assure a regular update of information and the certification status of the lodges in cooperation with the certification partners in the region.

Furthermore, the approach and the experiences of the Sustainable Lodges project may be shared with other tour operator associations offering trips to Southern Africa.



# PRACTICAL INFORMATION, WEBSITES, AND ADDRESSES

## The partner organisations involved

KAZA Secretariat, Dr. Morris Mtsambiwa:  
mzmtsambiwa@gmail.com, [www.kavangozambezi.org](http://www.kavangozambezi.org)

Sustainable Tourism Conservation Alliance Africa:  
[www.sustainabletourismalliance.net](http://www.sustainabletourismalliance.net)

Eco-awards Namibia, Hazel Milne:  
admin@ecoawards-namibia.org, [www.ecoawards-namibia.org](http://www.ecoawards-namibia.org)

Botswana Ecotourism Certification,  
Richard Malesu: rmalesu@botswanatourism.co.bw,  
[www.botswanatourism.co.bw/eco-certification-system](http://www.botswanatourism.co.bw/eco-certification-system)

Fair Trade Tourism, Manuel Bollmann:  
manuel@fairtrade.travel, [www.fairtrade.travel](http://www.fairtrade.travel)

Green Tourism, Andrea Nicholas:  
andrea@green-tourism.org, [www.green-tourism.org](http://www.green-tourism.org)

## Guidelines and Handbooks

Sustainable Lodges promotional brochure:  
[www.futouris.org/projekte/kaza-sustainable-lodges/](http://www.futouris.org/projekte/kaza-sustainable-lodges/)

Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Tourism  
Development (2004): Supply chain management handbook:  
[www.toinitiative.org/reporting](http://www.toinitiative.org/reporting)

LEEDS Metropolitan University (no date): Tourism Supply Chains:  
[www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/images/media/5\\_Tourism\\_supply\\_chains.pdf](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/images/media/5_Tourism_supply_chains.pdf)

DestiNet: [www.destinet.eu](http://www.destinet.eu)

Global Sustainable Tourism Council: [www.gstcouncil.org](http://www.gstcouncil.org)

Nature Friends International, Working Group on Tourism &  
Development, Ecotrans & Bread for the World (2014):  
Sustainability in Tourism – A Guide through the Label Jungle.  
[www.tourism-watch.de/files/labelguide\\_en\\_web.pdf](http://www.tourism-watch.de/files/labelguide_en_web.pdf)

Centre for Sustainable Tourism (ZENAT) (2016): Inventory and  
assessment of certification systems for sustainable tourism in  
Germany. Study funded by the German Federal Ministry of the  
Environment (report in German, English summary).  
[www.zenat-tourismus.de/files/Zertifizierungssysteme\\_nachhaltiger\\_Tourismus\\_in\\_Deutschland.pdf](http://www.zenat-tourismus.de/files/Zertifizierungssysteme_nachhaltiger_Tourismus_in_Deutschland.pdf)

## End Notes

- 1 Tour Operators' Initiative (2002): Tour Operators' Sector Supplement for Use with the GRI 2002 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines
- 2 Leeds Metropolitan University / The Travel Foundation: Tourism Supply Chain, no date
- 3 TOI 2004
- 4 see the chapter on "The use of certification for the Sustainable Lodges project"
- 5 Centre for Sustainable Tourism (ZENAT) (2016): Inventory and assessment of certification systems for sustainable tourism in Germany. Study funded by the German Federal Ministry of the Environment (English summary)
- 6 An excellent overview is provided at [www.destinet.eu](http://www.destinet.eu)
- 7 [www.gstcouncil.org/en/gstc-certification/gstc-criteria/criteria-for-hotels-and-tour-operators.html](http://www.gstcouncil.org/en/gstc-certification/gstc-criteria/criteria-for-hotels-and-tour-operators.html)
- 8 [www.gstcouncil.org/en/gstc-partners-2/gstc-recognized-standards/gstc-recognized-standards-for-hotels-tour-operators.html](http://www.gstcouncil.org/en/gstc-partners-2/gstc-recognized-standards/gstc-recognized-standards-for-hotels-tour-operators.html)
- 9 Totem Tourism (2013): Tourism & Greenwash Report
- 10 ZENAT 2016
- 11 Nature Friends International, Working Group on Tourism & Development, Ecotrans & Bread for the World (2014): Sustainability in Tourism – A Guide through the Label Jungle
- 12 ZENAT 2016
- 13 Stratieva, N. (2014): Green Hotels - Made in Germany. How can the current market for green hotels be optimised? Clarifying wrong assumptions regarding prices and filling information gaps. Study on behalf of VDR Hotel Certification (in German)





**Published by:**

Futouris e.V., Schicklerstr.5, 10179 Berlin, Inga Meese ([www.futouris.org](http://www.futouris.org), [inga.meese@futouris.org](mailto:inga.meese@futouris.org))

**Concept and texts by:**

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Strasdas, ZENAT Centre for Sustainable Tourism at Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development ([www.zenat-tourismus.de](http://www.zenat-tourismus.de), [wolfgang.strasdas@hnee.de](mailto:wolfgang.strasdas@hnee.de)) and Diana Körner, mascontour, Sustainable Tourism Consulting & Communication, Berlin ([www.mascontour.info](http://www.mascontour.info), [koerner@mascontour.info](mailto:koerner@mascontour.info))

**Layout and graphics:**

Constantin Sasse

December 2016

**WWW.FUTOURIS.ORG**

FUTOURIS GESCHÄFTSSTELLE · SCHICKLERSTRASSE 5 · D-10179 BERLIN  
TELEFON: +49 (030) 27 89 0182 · E-MAIL: [INFO@FUTOURIS.ORG](mailto:INFO@FUTOURIS.ORG)