

Wine industry expecting record crop

I GENERAL

The 2013 harvest season exceeded the expectations of the South African wine industry and this will be the biggest wine grape crop ever produced, although it had a late and slow start.

Although the crop was harvested later than usual and over a short time, the cold, wet winter constituted ideal weather conditions during the flowering and berry set period and moderate weather conditions during this harvest season throughout the various viticultural areas contributed to the size and quality of this year's harvest. It was also a particularly healthy year with effective disease and pest control by producers where needed.

Bigger harvests are expected in all the wine districts, with the exception of Robertson, and record crops are on the cards for Olifants River, Breedekloof and Worcester. After two dry and consequently smaller vintages, Malmesbury produced a considerably bigger crop and in the Orange River district it's quite evident that the vineyards are starting to recover from the flood damage that occurred in 2011.

The total crop is 4.6% higher than the record crop in 2008 – and high-quality wines are anticipated for the 2013 vintage.

Crop size** – The 2013 wine grape crop is expected to reach 1 491 432 tons according to the latest estimate (30 April) of the SA Wine Industry Information and Systems (Sawis). This exceeds the 2012 crop by 5.4% and is 4.6% bigger than the previous record crop in 2008. With the exception of Robertson, the rest of the nine wine districts had bigger crops than in 2012 with record crops in Olifants River, Breedekloof and Worcester.

The 2013 wine harvest – including juice and concentrate for non-alcoholic purposes, wine for brandy and distilling wine – is expected to amount to 1 152 million litres, calculated at an average recovery of 773 litres per ton of grapes.

2012/13 Growing season – The harvest season was particularly late and about two weeks shorter than usual. Prolonged winter conditions continued in some areas up until September, followed by a cool spring, which delayed bud burst by 7 to 14 days. The cold, wet weather conditions ensured even bud burst, as well as the accumulation of water supplies that would allow the vineyards to cope with the warmer conditions later in the season.

The vineyards had good growth in ideal dry weather conditions during the flowering and berry set period, although it occurred later than usual.

Early cultivars ripened later than usual but an extremely dry, warm December resulted in the late cultivars being ripened at the normal time. The harvest was therefore taken in over

a shorter period of time, which added to immense pressure in terms of intakes and cellar capacity.

Ideal weather conditions during the harvest season – moderate day temperatures, cool night temperatures and no prolonged rain or heat waves – had a positive impact on wine grape quality and establishing good colour and flavour.

It was also a particularly healthy year and diseases, pests and rot only occurred later in the season, while warm, dry weather conditions and effective disease and pest control resulted in minimal losses.

Wine potential – Producers, viticulturists and winemakers are excited about a promising crop in terms of quality. The moderate harvest season contributed to intense colour, exceptional flavour and good structure in the red cultivars, especially for Pinotage appearing good in terms of size and quality. Throughout the industry winemakers anticipate excellent fruity and tropical white wines with fresh characteristics.

Breedekloof – An ideal year with exceptional quantity and quality.

Klein Karoo – A large crop of high quality which was harvested over a short, late harvest period.

Malmesbury – A big crop with promising wines of good flavour, colour and structure after two dry years and consequent small crops.

Olifants River – A record crop of average quality placed immense pressure on the wine cellars.

Orange River – A slightly larger crop throughout the cultivar spectrum indicates that the vineyards recovered from the large-scale flood damage that occurred in 2011.

Paarl – A very good crop this year – slightly bigger with exceptional quality.

Robertson – A late vintage with many challenges, above-average quality and some good productions.

Stellenbosch – A slightly bigger wine grape crop delivers good quality wines, especially with top quality red wines.

Worcester – The biggest crop ever – harvested in a relatively short time – with the promise of good quality wines.

* An agricultural/viticultural report

** Crop sizes are based on the Sawis estimate of 30 April 2013.

Enquiries:

Francois Viljoen

VinPro Consultation Service Manager

Tel: 021 807 3303

E-mail: viljoenf@vinpro.co.za

II OVERVIEW PER DISTRICT

BREEDEKLOOF

Crop size

254 483 tons, 2% higher

Production trends

The 2013 wine grape crop will be remembered for quantity as well as quality. It was however slightly smaller than the 2012 crop – possibly as a result of wind during the flowering and berry set period and capacity pressure at wine cellars towards the end of the harvest season – but this year's crop is still above-average.

The good post-harvest period, cold winter and good soil water before bud burst contributed towards the size of the crop, while a relatively cold growing season and ripening period constituted good flavour in both white and red cultivars as well as colour in the red cultivars.

Chardonnay for the white cultivars and Pinotage for the red cultivars performed very well with regards to productions.

Climate and viticultural trends

The post-harvest period from April 2012 was dry and without any diseases, with vineyards looking good and consisting of sufficient ripened wood.

The winter started off wet and cold but turned out to be slightly drier during July, after which it ended with a cold and wet August. The snow on the mountains was also thick and could be seen for almost two months continuously. It was really good news for the replenishment of underground water reserves as well as filling up the farm dams. Sufficient cold units were accumulated during the winter months for normal bud burst.

Rainfall for May, June and July were respectively 11 mm (against the 59 mm long-term average), 80 mm (against 74 mm), 51 mm (against 116 mm).

The vineyards mostly had bud burst at the normal stages, especially with good looking and even bud burst for Chardonnay. Even shoot growth was typical this year and shoots mostly had bud burst on the bearers. The initial shoot growth was however sluggish but improved dramatically later in the season. It was especially the case for newly planted vineyards which started off slowly, possibly on account of the slightly cooler climate during September and October.

The growing season of October to November was relatively cool with a very low rainfall. The strong winds during the flowering and berry set period were initially a major concern but did not have a significant impact on the crop in the end. December was abnormally warm and dry after which it cooled off slightly during January, but it still remained to be very dry.

The rest of the ripening period until the end of March was cooler and still drier than usual with relatively cool temperatures at night. The total rainfall from November 2012 to March 2013 was only 34 mm.

The harvesting only started about 10 days later than usual and ended around the normal time.

General comments

It was a very healthy year with very few diseases and pests. *Botrytis* rot and powdery mildew were both problematic in some cases but the powdery mildew occurred much later and wouldn't have had such a substantial impact on the crop in any case. Mealy bug was kept under control, mainly because of a better strategy for mealy bug control rather than climatic influences. There was a great deal of weevil damage at the beginning of the season.

The initial growth was slow but most of the vineyards started showing vigorous growth as from November. It was a relatively cool ripening period with no substantial heat waves.

Irrigation requirements were already high early in the season regardless of a good, wet start, but possibly because of the dry and windy growing season.

Grape and wine quality

The quality of the red wines is looking very good and is indicated with slightly smaller berries en good canopy balance. Cooler temperatures at night during the ripening period also constituted attractive colours in the red wines.

The flavour spectrum and intensity of the white cultivars is much better than the 2012 crop – especially with Sauvignon Blanc appearing to be much better this year.

There was immense pressure in terms of cellar capacity at the end of the harvest season. A considerable amount of grapes were harvested above the desired optimal degree of ripeness because the wine cellars were full. Hopefully this won't have too much of a negative impact on the quality and quantity.

– Leon Dippenaar: 083 455 5194, leon@vinpro.co.za

KLEIN KAROO

Crop size

46 355 tons, 4% higher

Production trends

Producers boasted a bigger crop with good quality this year as a result of a cool season with heat at the right times, good berry set, more than sufficient winter and spring rainfall and adequate irrigation water.

The harvest season still ended earlier than usual although it started off late on account of the cooler weather conditions. The harvest season was therefore late and short.

Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc and White Muscadell had big crops for the white cultivars. The red cultivars such as Pinotage, Shiraz and Merlot yielded higher. Wine quality is good overall; the red cultivars with attractive colour and ripe berry flavours are exceptional this year.

Climate and viticultural trends

Good rainfall at the end of March and mid-April introduced the new season in the right way. The vineyards retained their leaves long enough to accumulate reserves. Cold units reached the highest levels these past ten years and were more than sufficient for the breaking of dormancy.

Rainfall the past winter was exceptionally good (180% to 225%). Farm dams were filled and the soil was replenished with more than sufficient moisture with the second rainfall. Big dams in the area were about 90% full at the end of the winter. More irrigation water was therefore available than in 2012.

The cold winter led to even bud burst and growth. Bud burst started on the normal time for the early cultivars but the late cultivars had early bud burst. This short time of bud burst already predicted a short harvest season. Cold, wet and overcast weather conditions initially delayed the growth immensely as well as the cold weather also delaying flowering, ripening and the harvest itself.

The vineyards already showed strong growth at the later than normal time when flowering started. Warmer than usual weather conditions during November and December were quite favourable for flowering purposes. The vineyards overcame the first heat wave with relative ease during mid-December, thanks to sufficient groundwater content. This also led to the reduction of green flavours because of it occurring just before véraison. Véraison occurred late but was particularly even. This short period during which véraison for all cultivars occurred once again predicted a short harvest season.

The climate was cool during harvesting with a gradual increase in ripening and sugar, having a positive impact on the overall quality. Tannins took longer to mature and the grapes were still harvested more matured despite the absence of green flavours. The early cultivars such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Muscadel and Pinotage only ripened very late. As opposed to this, the late cultivars such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Ruby Cabernet mainly ripened on time or even earlier. Fermentation space was a major challenge since the harvest season started late and ended earlier. Fortunately the weather remained moderate to cool and the grapes were overall healthy up until they were ready to be processed.

General comments

Sufficient irrigation water was available throughout the season during the year and this definitely contributed towards the bigger crop.

The cold, wet winter and cool spring brought along challenges such as weeds, snails, erinose and powdery mildew. Summer rain in Calitzdorp and Oudtshoorn led to downy mildew late in the season. Very severe but limited hail damage also occurred in this area. These challenges were however managed very well by producers and cellars and losses were therefore limited to the minimum.

Grape and wine quality

Winemakers are overall very satisfied with the quality of the 2013 harvest. The grapes could have been harvested fully matured on account of cool weather conditions during the harvest season.

Red wine grapes had extraordinary colour and the wines are mostly more full-bodied than in 2012, infused with fully matured berry flavours. The exceptional red cultivars for this year include Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Ruby Cabernet.

The white cultivars mostly had attractive tropical flavours with Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc showing potential.

– *Johannes Mellet: 082 922 9547, melletj@vinpro.co.za*

MALMESBURY

Crop size

117 827 tons, 14% higher

Production trends

This region experienced a good, normal year once again on account of a good winter, after two dry years with great reductions in the total harvest. Most cultivars produced bigger crops than in 2012 and the 2013 vintage could be considered as a great and good quality year. High quality wines with good flavours, colour and structure are expected.

Chardonnay and Chenin Blanc showed considerably bigger crops, among other things, as a result of better berry set of the early cultivars. Crops for the red wine grape cultivars such as Pinotage, Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon also did exceptionally well compared to 2012 with the Pinotage crop increasing with 42%.

Non-traditional cultivars such as Mourvèdre, Grenache Noir, Grenache Blanc and Viognier once again showed that these cultivars have adapted extremely well in the area with the potential to produce wines of top quality.

Climate and viticultural trends

This region experienced a very good winter with above-average rainfall after two dry winters. It was especially noticeable that the grapevines retained their leaves for longer after the 2012 harvest, which will have a positive impact on the accumulation of reserves. Preliminary pruning started actively at the end of May/beginning of June.

The cold weather conditions that occurred from May to July were sufficient to fulfil the cold needs of the vineyards. The vineyards experienced very good and even bud burst at the start of spring and had bud burst two weeks later than usual as a result of the delay in the cold climate. The season therefore started late.

The bunches had generally set very well and they were full – especially in the areas where sufficient irrigation water were available as well as in the case of early cultivars such as Chardonnay, Pinotage and Chenin Blanc.

The south-easter raged fiercely since the end of October/beginning of November but fortunately it hasn't caused significant damage. Good and favourable weather conditions occurred during the flowering and berry set period with the exception of Cabernet

Sauvignon. The wind strength experienced during December and January was above-average and the eastwind caused great damage to the leaves and bunches.

Véraison occurred evenly and the grapes had a good colour break. The vineyards were healthy overall and the few cases of downy mildew were under control. Fungal diseases occurred particularly late in the season – especially in the case of white cultivars – after the moist weather conditions. The rain showers during the harvest season led to sporadic *Botrytis* rot in more vigorous Chenin Blanc blocks.

General comments

Good rainfall was experienced during this year which contributed towards the higher quality of the grapes in combination with cooler weather conditions at the start of the harvest season as well as cooler night and morning temperatures during harvesting. The cool weather conditions also stretched the ripening period with another 7 to 10 days. Heat waves at the beginning of March led to the late cultivars being harvested at the normal time. Producers with access to irrigation water could relieve some of the stress on the grapes on these warmer days.

Minimal problems were experienced in terms of diseases and pests.

A great deal of dryland goblet vine producers ripped their soil about 600 mm deep to prune some of the roots but mainly to plough open the soil for optimal moisture absorption, arising from dry conditions occurring over the past year.

Grape and wine quality

Grape analyses for the 2013 season were exceptionally favourable for the preparation of high quality wines.

There already exist early indications that the quality of the white wine is very good. The flavours are exceptionally fruity and tropical with allot of fresh qualities. The colours of the red cultivars were very good in general, making it possible for the winemakers to establish good colour extraction within the cellar. The size and quality of the Pinotage grapes were especially outstanding.

– *Braham Oberholzer: 072 070 3194, brahamo@vinpro.co.za*

OLIFANTS RIVER

Crop size

244 496 tons, 9% higher

Production trends

A record crop of good quality was produced this year, which placed immense pressure on the wine cellars.

This big crop is a reflection of the producers' attitude towards striving to produce by adapting their pruning, irrigation and fertilisation practices.

The season was especially characterised by an initial delay in the ripening of the wine grapes as well as the eventual pressure on the fermentation space of the cellars when most of the cultivars matured at the same time, in combination with a considerably bigger harvest.

All cultivars – with the exception of Cabernet Sauvignon – yielded bigger crops with Pinotage standing out above the rest with a considerably high crop load. After initial expectations that Colombar wouldn't be yielding as much because of its loose bunches, this was indeed not the case.

Climate and viticultural trends

Very moderate temperatures were experienced during the post-harvest period of 2012 and the vineyards had sufficient time to accumulate reserves. The leaves remained productive long enough, since no diseases caused any leaf loss.

The real cold temperatures only started in June but these were sufficient to accumulate cold units. No frost however occurred and therefore no damage was caused. It was one of the driest winters in a long time but there was adequate irrigation water to fulfil the winter needs of the grapevines.

Bud burst was generally very even and complete with the exception of Shiraz which once again experienced uneven bud burst despite the good winter cold.

Favourable weather conditions occurred during the flowering and berry set period without significant rain or abnormally strong winds. This resulted in good flowering and berry set, ensuring the start of an exceptionally good harvest.

Ripening occurred gradually up to mid-January, after which a few very warm days accelerated the ripening process. Yet most wine cellars only started harvesting about 10 days later than usual. A few consecutive very warm days during mid-February and early in March helped along the sluggish start of the harvest season.

Most of the cellars already exceeded the amount of tons on the same date during the 2012 season within a month after the beginning of the harvest season, despite a later start. Fermentation space was therefore extremely limited and some wine cellars were even forced to stop all grape intakes for a few days to create more space. The last grapes were taken in around the 24th of April.

General comments

It was an exceptionally healthy year with oidium only being out of control in a few vineyards. The rain during mid-February caused some rotting problems – especially in the case of Chenin Blanc and some late Colombar grapes which were still on the grapevines at that stage. An additional 6 mm of rain at the end of March aggravated these rotting problems, as well as for the Hanepoot grapes but fortunately not to such an extent that it will impact negatively on the harvest.

Two small heat waves mainly accelerated the ripening process but did not cause any physical damage. Sufficient water was available for post-harvest irrigation and fertilisation application and the Clanwilliam dam is at its normal level for this time of year.

Grape and wine quality

The white cultivars that came in during the first weeks initially presented attractive flavours but these analyses were not looking so good later on and it will most probably be an average year for the white cultivars.

The red cultivars are looking good in general with exceptionally good colour.

– Jeff Joubert: 083 455 5190, joubertj@vinpro.co.za

ORANGE RIVER

Crop size

147 264 tons, 25% higher

Production trends

A considerably bigger crop throughout the cultivar spectrum indicates that the vineyards are starting to recover from the large-scale flood damage that occurred in 2011, in combination with a good winter climate and dry weather conditions during the harvest season.

The average yields for both Chenin Blanc and Colombar were higher than average, with Chenin Blanc especially performing very well.

Climate and viticultural trends

Temperatures began dropping drastically since the end of May, together with the first signs of frost and the start of leaf fall. Sufficient cold units were accumulated in June. Regular rain showers occurred during June and July in combination with high humidity which is very favourable for good bud burst percentages and yields in the Orange River area. It also led to a cooling down effect which contributed towards the accumulation of cold units.

Bud burst began around 1 September for the early cultivars. Even bud burst and a good budding percentage were especially noticeable in most of the cultivars. The budding percentage for the long bearer (Guyot pruned) vineyards was exceptionally good, possibly as a result of the good cold conditions at the end of May until mid-June. Fertility was overall good for most of the cultivars with both Colombar and Chenin Blanc delivering double bunches in most cases.

The end of September started off with very cold weather conditions and widespread frost damage. So called “vineyard frost” caused some damage especially for Sultana vineyards as well as for wine grapes, but to a lesser extent. Losses were limited as a result of the good recovery ability of early winegrape blocks with frost damage. Normal average temperatures occurred during September with no rain.

Average to below average temperatures occurred during November, with almost no rainfall. Regular rain showers were experienced during December in the eastern and central parts of the lower Orange River area, with showers up to 60 mm in certain parts on Christmas Day. These rain showers, high humidity and incidence of dew towards the end of December led to downy mildew. It spread quickly as a result of poor control techniques and caused large-scale damage to certain blocks. Very warm and dry weather conditions at the

beginning of January to the end of March however contributed towards the limitation of the spreading of downy mildew.

The first wine grapes were taken in around mid-January. Most early wine grape cultivars reached full maturity at least 10 days later than in 2012 whereas the later cultivars such as Colombar had bud burst at the right time as a result of the constant heat during January, February and March. This led to a bottle-neck situation at most of the cellars.

General comments

The Orange River district had a very healthy year overall in terms of diseases. The occurrence of downy mildew at the end of December was mostly limited to the eastern parts and was fortunately nipped in the bud together with *Botrytis* thanks to dry, warm weather conditions from the beginning of January to the end of March. Limited hail damage occurred in the Grootdrink area during January.

The vineyards performed well overall after the poor yields of 2011 and 2012 as well as the favourable winter conditions during the 2013 season. There was sufficient water available to cope with the warm, dry conditions during the harvest period.

Grape and wine quality

The average pH levels of the wines were very good early in the season but increased later on because of the constant warm climate during this harvest season. The quality of the wine was however good in general in the cellar and the recovery was better than in 2012. The quality of the grapes which were taken in after the rainfalls at the end of March is however below average and was mostly utilised for the production of juice.

– *Henning Burger: 082 824 4941, henning@owk.co.za*

PAARL

Crop size

149 754 tons, 4% higher

Production trends

A very good crop was produced this year – slightly bigger with exceptional grape and wine quality, especially in terms of the red wines.

This year will be remembered for excessively strong winds and a very dry season although adaptations in terms of pruning and canopy management as well as sufficient irrigation and fertilisation delivered good results in the end.

Chardonnay, Pinotage and Cabernet Sauvignon had high productions of good quality wines – possibly as a result of a sprawling approach as well as good canopy management practices.

The top red wines showed even more potential than in 2009, which is considered to be one of South Africa's best vintage years ever.

Climate and viticultural trends

Good reserves had been accumulated during the post-harvest period with sufficient rainfall from April to May, contributing towards the ripening of shoots and leaves.

Low temperatures at night during May promoted leaf fall and the vineyards were able to rest, after which adequate cold units up until mid-June had a positive impact on the breaking of dormancy and also created good expectations for bud burst. Farm dams in this area were still below 70% full, despite the sufficient rainfall during August and September and a consequent high total rainfall.

Bud burst occurred almost 10 days late for the early cultivars as a result of a cold and wet September but the good cold units that were accumulated during the winter season constituted even bud burst in general. Uneven bud burst was only observed in Shiraz. Later cultivars mainly had bud burst on time, already predicting immense pressure during the harvest season.

An unprecedented, prolonged en sometimes gale force south-easter raged fiercely since mid-October and during the flowering period, which caused major damage to the shoots, leaves and flower clusters. It also contributed to the fear that berry set would be adversely affected.

The driest summer since 2002 had been reported with no significant rain during the harvest season. A few warm days above 40°C occurred sporadically during the season but December had above-average heat. *Véraison* occurred about five days earlier than usual for most of the cultivars but the ripening process was slightly slower and the harvest season only started about 10 days later.

The sugar levels increased rapidly as the season continued and the late cultivars even had to be harvested earlier than usual. Low minimum temperatures from the end of February decelerated the ripening process and late cultivars such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot achieved good optimal ripeness levels. The producers' cellars were particularly under immense pressure in terms of the crop intake on time, leading to the last batches of grapes being mostly harvested at a relatively high degree of ripeness.

General comments

It was a very healthy season with no significant downy mildew and insect pests. Serious incidences of powdery mildew infection were however widely observed on the shoots, leaves, bunch stems and berries since January, where preventative spraying programmes were insufficient. A few light rain showers during February and March increased the risk of *Botrytis* but overall there was little rot, possibly because of the constant wind throughout the season.

Vigour was kept relatively under control by the wind although the canopy as well as the crop itself was damaged rather severely in some cases. It might appear that the Mourvèdre bunches are especially very susceptible to wind and there was major damage to these vineyards.

Irrigation water lasted well throughout the season, with sufficient water for post-harvest irrigation and fertilisation applications. Minimum sun burn occurred – possibly the result of early exposure to the sun because of wind damage to the leaves and shoots.

Grape and wine quality

The majority of red wines have deep, dark colours and a very good structure.

Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc have a very good average quality for the white wines with a few top quality wines, while the Chardonnay wines are above-average. Berry shrivel was prominent for Shiraz throughout the industry but it doesn't seem that wine grape flavours are strongly influenced by this.

Abnormally high pHs and low total acidity levels occurred in general – possibly the result of the constant wind limiting photosynthesis and promoting respiration, also requiring great additions of tartaric acid and therefore increasing the production cost.

Since March all cellars have been under great capacity pressure and harvest quotas had to be established at a few cellars for a short period of time during this harvest season. Recovery is looking real good and might even be better than in 2012.

– Johan Viljoen: 082 890 7446, viljoenj@vinpro.co.za

ROBERTSON

Crop size

236 102 tons, 2% lower

Production trends

Although being slightly smaller than the record crop in 2012, this year's harvest is on the other hand exceptional in terms of size and quality.

The big crop could be ascribed to sufficient irrigation water – especially in the areas where producers are dependent on the mountain water – resulting in various bunches and good berry set. There still remain an active attempt by all producers to increase the productions because of the fact that profitability is under pressure and the net hectares for wine grapes are still increasing.

Productions are varied among the blocks but yields for Pinotage increased considerably, as well as Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc also delivering bigger productions. It will surely be remembered as a late vintage with many challenges, above-average quality and good productions.

Climate and viticultural trends

Leaf fall occurred on time after a post-harvest period without any relative diseases. Good cold weather conditions with above-average rainfall occurred during the critical time – mid-May to mid-June – for dormancy breaking. The rainfall for May to August was 51% higher than the long-term average, which was favourable for the growth of cover crop. Producers being dependant on mountain water started off the season with sufficient irrigation water.

The vineyards had even bud burst as a result of the good winter cold. The first blocks experienced bud burst about a week to two weeks later than usual although the time of bud burst varied considerably according to the final pruning date. The vineyards had initial slow

growth as a result of the cold environmental temperature and soils but soon had vigorous growth as it became warmer.

The good winter rains continued during September and October while the dry and windless weather conditions in November were favourable for flowering and berry set. This dry weather conditions continued during the summer and after an extremely warm December the temperatures were back to normal again with cooler nights during January and February. *Véraison* occurred two weeks later than usual as a result of a cooler spring.

The harvest season was relatively moderate with a few very warm days in-between. There were however no prolonged periods with extremely high temperatures.

Ripening of the early cultivars occurred about two weeks later than usual while the late cultivars were only a few days late. At times this placed immense pressure on the intakes.

General comments

It was a growing season with very high pressure of diseases although producers limited these damages by applying good disease control. Very little cases of downy mildew infections were reported but powdery mildew – which makes the berries burst and causes sour rot – already occurred early in the season, especially in Chardonnay, therefore leading to productions losses.

Botrytis rot was also problematic at the beginning of the season as a result of rain and a lack of wind during February – especially in the lower areas or towards the Breede River. But the rest of the season was dry and healthy.

The vineyards initially experienced slow growth but had more vigorous growth than usual later in the season as a result of the high rainfall during October. It increased the water consumption considerably after which it decreased at a fast rate during March.

Grape and wine quality

The quality of the wines seems good this year despite low acidity levels in the blocks that were harvested first. The acidity levels stabilised later in the season with normal pH levels.

The colour of the red wines is looking good although productions were high and the quality also appears to be promising. The quality of the Chardonnay wines is outstanding for the white wines.

The big crop and simultaneous ripening of early and late cultivars such as Shiraz, Ruby Cabernet and Cabernet Sauvignon led to immense pressure on cellar space. Fortunately there were few rainy days and therefore no interruptions during the harvest season.

The recovery is normal and not unusually high or low, according to the winemakers.

– Hennie Visser: 083 455 5193, henniev@vinpro.co.za

STELLENBOSCH

Crop size

118 118 tons, 1% higher

Production trends

A slightly higher wine grape crop produced a good quality wine, especially with above-average red wines this year.

This year had been characterised by challenges such as canopy and disease management, extreme heat stress and wind damage during berry set, as well as pressure on cellar capacity during the harvest season.

This year had also been characterised by smaller berries which had a negative effect on the yield but then again a positive effect on quality. Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Merlot and Shiraz produced average to above-average crops. The rapid véraison of cultivars within a specific bunch and during the interval between cultivars especially stood out this year.

Climate and viticultural trends

The post-harvest period is characterised by an above-average rainfall during April, followed by dry and cold weather conditions in May. Leaf fall occurred on time with leafroll infected vines dropping their leaves later than usual according to custom. The weather conditions towards the end of May/beginning of June were sufficient to ensure good bud burst.

The winter was much colder and wetter than usual with a higher than average rainfall from June to September.

The vineyards experienced bud burst about seven days late, depending on the location and cultivar. Bud burst was even with the exception of some blocks such as Sauvignon Blanc and Shiraz. Cold weather conditions after bud burst caused initial slow shoot growth with acceleration in the shoot growth later on as the temperatures started to rise again.

The flowering and berry set period kicked off with a cold and wet October, with 170% higher than usual rainfall and lower temperatures. It was followed by a considerably drier, warmer November. The accumulation of high soil moisture and warmer weather during November led to acceleration in the shoot growth and dense canopies, placing some pressure on the canopy management for the producers.

The warmest December was experienced in 48 years with 23 days above 30°C and 10 days above 35°C. The dense canopy and the fact that the growing season was two weeks late, limited sunburn to the minimum but strong winds caused damage to the bunches, canopy and even trellis systems in certain areas during this time.

January and February were wetter than usual and more variation between day and night temperatures had a positive impact on the grape quality during the ripening period from January to March.

General comments

The wet conditions during the spring were very favourable for the occurrence of fungal diseases such as dead arm disease and downy mildew. Erinose could be noticed in small amounts in the Sauvignon Blanc vineyards while serious powdery mildew infections caused damage to the leaves, shoots and bunches later in the season.

Snails occurred in large amounts on new shoot growth but the damage impact wasn't that severe as the producers practiced good control techniques. The occurrence of weevils and katydids was not significant. The warmer and drier weather conditions occurring after the high winter rains also created optimal conditions for weeds and therefore had to be managed well.

The water supply levels were sufficient throughout the season and all irrigation needs were easily fulfilled. Regular rain showers during the ripening period caused only relative pressure on the irrigation itself. The wet conditions with high humidity however led to rot – especially in cultivars with more compact bunches.

Grape and wine quality

Early cultivars such as Pinotage had high sugars in general while the skins were sticky and coarse. One should therefore wait a bit longer for the grapes to reach optimal ripeness with good flavours before harvesting them.

White cultivars have a good balance between fruity, tropical and green flavours in general.

Higher temperatures during the last half of the ripening period probably contributed towards low acidity levels and placed some pressure on space in the cellar – since most of the grapes ripened at the same time.

Red cultivars are excluded with above-average colour and Cabernet Sauvignon is also expected to have good wine quality which produced smaller berries with exceptional flavour components.

– *Conrad Schutte: 082 804 0422, conrad@vinpro.co.za*

WORCESTER

Crop size

177 033 tons, 2% higher

Production trends

The biggest crop ever has been harvested this year – in a relatively short time – with the promise of good quality wines.

The harvest season initially started off late, followed by a ripening period of all cultivars occurring at the same time. The last blocks experienced problems reaching the optimal sugar levels although many of the grapes were already too matured during harvesting as a result of rapid increases in the sugar levels.

Chardonnay and Pinotage delivered particularly good productions and the colour of the red wines was impressive.

Climate and viticultural trends

Leaf fall in the post-harvest period did not occur according to a normal pattern. In some vineyards leaf fall already occurred directly after the harvest season, which is not ideal for the accumulation of reserves.

The winter was initially dry with the first rainfall in June. Good rainfall and cold weather conditions followed in July and August, with snowfall on the surrounding mountain ranges. The cold units were particularly high and no problems were predicted in terms of dormant breaking for the dormant buds.

The vineyards experienced bud burst on their usual time in general. The varying weather conditions during this period however constituted a prolonged and stretched out bud burst period and eventual flowering period. The cold winds occurring during the flowering period also led to the occurrence of millerandage.

The growing season was particularly dry with a warm December which contributed to good growth with a consequent vigorous canopy.

The harvest season was about a week later than in 2012 but ripening accelerated as a result of the constant high temperatures and therefore all the wine cellars were under immense pressure from day one to establish daily quotas. Most of the cultivars all ripened at the same time which placed further pressure on cellars capacity.

General comments

It was once again a healthy year with no or little break outs of downy mildew or powdery mildew. *Botrytis* rot occurring later presented particular problems for Chenin Blanc vineyards but fortunately seemed to be under control as a result of effective leave removal actions and good chemical control programmes.

The particular warm and dry harvest season placed mountain water supplies under great pressure.

Grape and wine quality

The grape analyses were good overall with sufficient sugar/acidity ratios. It was expected that malic acid had increased concentrations because of all the acidic additional that had to be added after settling.

The wines are overall of good quality but the top quality wines seem to be less than in the past. The well-managed, suckered vineyards delivered the best wines once again. The red wines had a good colour change.

– *Pierre Snyman: 083 455 5191, pierre@vinpro.co.za*