

**PRESS RELEASE: 10 May 2016**

## **Challenging season brings smaller wine grape crop SA Wine Harvest Report 2016**

Challenging conditions led to a reduced wine grape crop for South African producers in 2016, but grapes were healthy and concentrated flavours promise good wines.

This according to the viticultural consultants of VinPro, the representative organisation for close to 3 500 South African wine producers and cellars.

The total wine grape crop is expected to be 6.7% smaller than in 2015.

“Although the crop is smaller, the industry still managed to reach higher productions than initially expected following a season characterised by abnormal heat and water shortages,” says Francois Viljoen, manager of VinPro’s viticulture consultation service.

Water supplies had a great impact on the harvest this year, especially in instances where vineyards were not buffered against the heat. Regions such as Robertson and the Klein Karoo, which received sufficient winter rainfall, had higher productions, while Worcester also obtained a bigger harvest. Most other regions produced smaller crops, but yields in Stellenbosch and the two dryland regions Paarl and Swartland were much lower than in 2015.

The weather was very warm, especially from the end of October towards the end of January, which restricted the growth and constituted lower bunch masses and smaller berries. However, the dry conditions led to the vineyards and grapes being very healthy overall.

Smaller berries led to more concentrated colour and flavour on the positive side and good wines are expected from the 2016 harvest.

South Africa is the 7th biggest wine producer world-wide and produces about 4% of the world’s wine.

### **Total Crop Size**

The 2016 wine grape crop is estimated at 1 378 596 tons according to the latest estimate (30 April 2016) of the South African Wine Industry Information and Systems (Sawis). This is 6.7% lower than in 2015.

The 2016 wine harvest – juice and concentrate for non-alcoholic purposes, wine for brandy and distilling wine included – is expected to amount to 1 070.8 million litres, calculated at an average recovery of 777 litres per ton of grapes.

### **2015/16 Growing season**

Good reserves were accumulated during the post-harvest period (April and May), after which leaf fall occurred mostly at the right time.

The winter started off late in most of the regions but the weather conditions were cold enough to break dormancy. Most of the regions experienced low rainfall with the exception of Robertson and the Klein Karoo. The dam and soil water levels were therefore not sufficiently filled up to prepare the vineyards for the warmer part of the season.

Spring came on time and the weather conditions were ideal which led to good, even bud burst. Most of the regions experienced heat waves as early as the end of October with extended heat conditions throughout the summer and a second heat wave during January, which affected the vineyards and berries adversely.

The heat wave during October occurred in several regions during the flowering and berry set period and the experts are convinced that it already started having a negative impact on production at that stage. Sun burn damage was experienced from the middle to the end of January, specifically with reference to Stellenbosch and Worcester. The extent of the damage will be determined in the months to follow.

The harvest period started a week early due to the warmer weather and it ended about two weeks earlier. However, the temperatures started cooling off from mid-February, which led to sluggish ripening in some cases, but it was advantageous for colour establishment in the late red wine cultivars.

One advantage of the dry season is that diseases and pests were limited. The areas that received sufficient rain were also followed up by ideal dry, warm weather which constituted healthy vineyards and grapes. Excessive and premature rainfall during mid-January in the Orange River region was fortunately followed by dry weather conditions.

### **Wine potential**

“Adaptability was the keyword – winemakers produced the best product from a challenging 2016 crop by means of good decision-making and state-of-the-art technology,” says Viljoen.

The grapes ripened at lower sugar levels in general, which is positive with regards to wines with lower alcohol. The acidity levels were low, which necessitated adaptations in the cellar itself.

The smaller berries that were produced will lead to good colour and intense flavour in this year’s red wines. The white wines also appear surprisingly good, with great structure and good flavours.

### **Overview of the regions**

**Breedekloof:** A slightly smaller crop than in 2015, but still above-average in size and of good quality.

**Klein Karoo:** A cold, wet winter and a warm, dry summer leading to a big and healthy crop.

**Malmesbury/Swartland:** A significantly smaller crop was taken in early and over a short period.

**Olifants River:** Despite challenging climate conditions and a significantly smaller crop, good quality wines are expected.

**Orange River:** A somewhat smaller crop with great variations in yields between producers.

**Paarl:** An abnormally small crop of which the cultivars all ripened early and simultaneously.

**Robertson:** Ideal seasonal conditions led to a bigger crop and promising wines.

**Stellenbosch:** A significantly smaller crop due to dry, warm weather conditions and veld fires.

**Worcester:** A bigger harvest than in 2015, despite limited water, unusual heat and veld fires.

**See [www.vinpro.co.za](http://www.vinpro.co.za) for the full harvest report per region.**

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