

## **Wine harvest promising despite challenging season**

### **II GENERAL**

Despite a challenging season characterised by high, and in some instances untimely rainfall, the South African wine industry expects an average sized, good quality wine grape harvest, with exceptional harvests in especially the coastal regions. This according to VinPro, the representative organisation for close to 3 600 South African wine producers and cellars.

The harvest commenced one to two weeks later than normal, due to late, cold winter conditions and a cooler spring. High rainfall mid-November and in January led to producers having to irrigate much less, but applying stricter disease control measures at higher input costs to limit losses.

Above average yields of exceptional quality were specifically obtained in the coastal regions, while irrigated areas also achieved good crops despite loss due to rot. The effect of a greater drive from producers to increase production and enhance profitability is evident from increased crop levels.

However, the Orange River experienced the greatest frost damage in years, which had a substantial effect on the harvest.

The total harvest will be approximately 2.6% smaller than the record harvest in 2013 and consumers can look forward to high quality wines from the 2014 harvest year.

**Crop size\*\*** – The 2014 wine grape crop is expected to reach 1 459 636 tons according to the latest estimate (30 April) of the SA Wine Industry Information and Systems (Sawis). It is 2.6% smaller than the record harvest in 2013.

The 2014 wine harvest – including juice and concentrate for non-alcoholic purposes, wine for brandy and distilling wine – is expected to amount to 1 130.5 million litres, calculated at an average recovery of 774 litres per ton of grapes.

**2013/14 Growing season** – A very good cold and wet winter filled water supplies to capacity, ensuring even bud burst.

Initial vineyard growth was slow due to late cold fronts in August, followed by cool, wet weather at the beginning of the growing season. This led to a high incidence of disease, and rainfall mid-November further hampered effective disease control by creating challenging spraying conditions and limiting access to vineyards. As a result, downy mildew resulted in crop losses early on in the season in some areas.

The climate was favourable for flowering thereafter, and good berry set was obtained. However, after the high rainfall mid-November, vigorous growth ensued, requiring extra input to ensure high grape quality and disease prevention via good canopy aeration and sunlight exposure.

Widespread rainfall at the beginning of January – more than 150 mm in the course of four days in the Breede River Valley – increased pressure due to disease and rot even further, while the coastal regions weren't affected as severely by the rain.

Ideal dry, moderate conditions reigned during ripening in January and mid-February, after which a warm period accelerated ripening and resulted in great pressure on intakes in some areas.

Cooler weather in March enhanced colour formation and flavour retention in later red cultivars. Regular rainfall at the end of March delayed ripening again and extended the harvest to mid-April.

**Wine potential** – Producers, viticulturists and winemakers look forward to a promising harvest with regard to quality. Moderate climate conditions during the harvest season contributed to intense colour, exceptional flavour and good structure in the red cultivars. White wines are expected to be particularly fruity and tropical, with fresh characteristics.

**Breedekloof** – An ideal year with exceptional quality and size; good colour in the red wines.

**Klein Karoo** – A good, but smaller harvest than the record harvest in 2013, with outstanding Shiraz, Chardonnay and Merlot.

**Malmesbury** – Higher yield of remarkable quality due to good soil moisture conditions in this mainly dryland area.

**Olifants River** – A somewhat smaller harvest due to rot challenges, but with promising white and red wine quality.

**Orange River** – Great frost damage resulted in a substantially lower yield; Colombar, Chenin Blanc and muscadel wines show good potential.

**Paarl** – An exceptional year, with much higher yields – especially in dryland areas – and the promise of very high quality wines.

**Robertson** – A late and challenging year, with good quality and average production.

**Stellenbosch** – One of the wettest seasons in years has coincided with an outstanding harvest with regard to crop size and quality.

**Worcester** – Despite a very challenging season, above average yields were obtained, with exceptional Chenin Blanc quality.

\* An agricultural/viticultural report

\*\* Crop sizes are based on the Sawis estimate of 30 April 2014.

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

#### **ISSUED BY VINPRO.**

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## **II OVERVIEW PER DISTRICT**

### **BREDEKLOOF**

#### **Production trends**

Breedekloof experienced an ideal year with regards to exceptional quality and size, just as last year.

The good post-harvest period, cold winter and good soil water before bud burst contributed towards good productions for both white and red cultivars. Production-driven vineyard practices as well as an increasing amount of young vineyards reaching full production also contributed towards these good productions.

The harvest was still slightly smaller than the 2013 crop, although it was of above-average size, possibly due to the fact that bunches didn't set well and the occurrence of Botrytis rot and downy mildew, which occurred quite early in the season. Red cultivars in specific had a greater decrease in tons to that of the white wine grapes.

The relatively cool growing season as well as the ripening period and especially the cool night temperatures constituted good quality in terms of flavour in both white and red cultivars. The cool conditions and substantial rainfall at the end of November and beginning of January however implied challenges in terms of vigorous growth and fungal diseases.

#### **Climate and viticultural trends**

The post-harvest period in 2013 was relatively without any diseases and the vineyards performed well overall.

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. It was really good news for the replenishment of underground water reserves as well as filling up the farm dams. September was slightly cooler and wetter than usual.

The vineyards mostly had bud burst around the normal time. Chardonnay once again had beautiful and even bud burst. The initial even shoot growth was typical this season and shoots mostly had bud burst on the bearers.

The temperatures were initially moderate from the time of bud burst to the beginning of December, with little wind and frequent rainfall. Vineyards were not exposed to extreme temperatures until mid-December. Above-average, heavy rainfall occurred during mid-November as well as in January, with widespread damage to the infrastructure.

Shoot growth initially had no vigorous growth, but "soft" climate conditions led to general vigorous growth from mid-November. The weather was moderate and ideal during the ripening period from January to mid-February.

The second half of February was very warm and dry. The grapes generally matured very fast with a great deal of sunburn damage and drying. The climate suddenly changed from mid-March and therefore cooler temperatures with sporadic rainfall occurred in general.

#### **General comments**

Outbreaks of powdery mildew were problematic in some instances but it occurred much later and had no substantial impact on the crop. Mealy bug also presented a problem in some instances and had a damaging effect on the bunches early in the season. Botrytis rot became a problem from mid-March. Some late cultivars, and in particular blocks with

substantial instances of leafroll, struggled with ripening towards the end of the season. These blocks were mostly subjected to Botrytis rot.

### **Grape and wine quality**

The quality of the red wines – especially the colour – is looking very good this year, possibly due to the cooler temperatures at night during the ripening period. The flavour spectrum and intensities of the white cultivars are quite acceptable with Chenin Blanc especially appearing to be very good.

Grapes generally reached a better physiological maturity on a lower sugar grade. It therefore provided winemakers with the perfect opportunity to produce good quality wines with lower alcohol.

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## **KLEIN KAROO**

### **Production trends**

The Klein Karoo had a good but smaller harvest than the record crop in 2013, mainly as a result of rain during the flowering period as well as grape losses due to downy mildew, powdery mildew, Botrytis rot and rhizopus rot.

Yields for the Chardonnay, Muscadel, Pinotage and Colombar cultivars were lower this year than last year, with exceptional quality as observed in the Shiraz, Merlot and Chardonnay cultivars.

Temperatures were mostly moderate with a cold September and March. Rain, overcast weather and dew were common with the management of fungal diseases as being the biggest challenge. Although the harvest season started late, it also ended late, and therefore relieving some of the pressure on the cellars.

### **Climate and viticultural trends**

Late blocks of Colombar were harvested a week or two after optimal maturity due to the restricted cellar space late in the previous season. These blocks were harvested with great difficulty with harvesters and also lost many leaves during and just after the harvesting period. The earlier blocks however retained their leaves beautifully after the harvest.

Cold units were above-average and were more than sufficient for the full breaking of dormancy.

It has been a good year for cover crops with sufficient and well-spread rainfall. The first rainfall early in April was followed by above-average rain during April, June and August. Farm dams were filled between 75% and 95% towards the end of the winter due to transfer water from the previous season and there was more than sufficient irrigation water available.

Bud burst, flowering, véraison as well as the harvesting itself, started off very late, possibly due to a cold, wet spring and above-average rainfall during October and November. Bud burst was however even and occurred in the normal order, mainly on bearers.

Warm, dry weather occurred from mid-December until the first week of January, and again during mid-February. We had a great deal of rain during the second week of January that led to most of the blocks not growing properly again or producing bigger berries.

Overall we had a dry harvest season with no disruption with regards to rain. Peak grape intakes occurred closer towards the end of the harvest season this year. March was exceptionally cool, which contributed towards the ripening of late cultivars being delayed and also led to the harvest season being more evenly managed than the cramped style of the 2013 crop.

### **General comments**

The high rainfall during the spring and January as well as the general occurrence of dew increased the pressure of diseases immensely. Intensive programmes were followed and were continued through January in order to protect the leaves and bunches. Rot occurred in January especially in Muscadel and early Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay cultivars.

High production vineyards profited a great deal by the exceptionally high total rainfall during the season. It was however noticeable that the premium vineyards on the outside boundaries had no more vigorous growth than usual. Berries were even noticeably smaller than usual.

Hail occurred in Montagu, Barrydale and Ladismith and no permanent damage to the grapevines was caused, although a limited number of producers were affected by these serious crop losses.

### **Grape and wine quality**

The colour of the red wine grapes is very good this year, with little green flavours in both white and red grapes. Physiological maturity was mostly reached on lower sugar levels, which presented the winemakers with more options.

Cultivars showing exceptional quality include Shiraz, Chardonnay and Merlot.

The pressure on cellar space was less this year than in 2013 as a result of the more evenly distribution of maturity levels and especially with regards to the late cultivars.

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## **MALMESBURY (SWARTLAND & DARLING)**

### **Production trends**

The season will be remembered for a wet winter and spring, followed by an exceptionally strong growth period. The timing of producers and cellars with regards to sprayings, canopy management and the harvest in general were challenged to the maximum, although it's predicted to be a very good year with regards to quantity and quality.

Productions were higher than in 2013 as a result of well-managed soil water conditions throughout the season. Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz delivered exceptional crops in particular. The intake and production of a very good harvest was established due to the even maturation levels.

### **Climate and viticultural trends**

The post-harvest period was characterised by good rainfall in April which led to a sufficient accumulation of reserves. A few outbreaks of powdery mildew however led to early leaf fall.

May was particularly dry with the first significant rainfall occurring towards the end of May, which had a negative impact on the quality of cover crops. A cold, wet June complied with the cold requirements of the vineyards. Good rainfall until August as well as a particularly wet spring gave rise to this year being one of the wettest years for cover crops.

Bud burst occurred very late and cultivars such as Chardonnay, which had bud burst first, came to a “halt” as a result of the cold, wet conditions. This led to the cultivars maturing unevenly and simultaneously. Uneven bud burst was observed in some of the Shiraz and Sauvignon Blanc blocks.

Berry set was overall very good despite scattered rain showers during mid-November. Sufficient water supply due to high soil water levels as well as moderate climate conditions stimulated strong growth and led to above-average bunch weights. Producers had to use more canopy management techniques to ensure sufficient aeration and light penetration.

The ripening period was relatively moderate with warm weather during mid-February, which implied that a great amount of grapes were ready to be harvested and placed the processing capacity of the cellars under immense pressure. The harvest season started a week to 10 days later than usual, although ripening caught up quite fast after the warm weather had set in and therefore the harvest season ended on time.

### **General comments**

Snails were observed in large amounts due to the wet spring, but they were managed effectively. Damage caused by millipedes also occurred in certain areas.

Weed control was initially applied effectively but the seeds germinated again as a result of the frequent follow-up rain showers and it was therefore a challenge to control it. Downy mildew started to become a problem just after the rainfall in November but the producers who used preventative spraying techniques didn't experience any major problems.

Very high soil water levels caused above-average growth and the water supply was more than sufficient in the irrigation areas. Very few water shortage symptoms were generally observed and dryland blocks managed the heat very well.

### **Grape and wine quality**

The quality of the grapes was very good in general with high acidity levels (especially malic acid) which were measured at the beginning of the season. Grapes were healthy with sporadic rot observed in more dense Chenin Blanc blocks.

The colour of the grapes was good, although the winemakers had to use sound judgement with regards to the juice racking in order to perfect the required skin/juice ratio in some of the red wine grapes. Juice recovery was significantly better, as well as in the dryland areas, which once again suggests sufficient water supply and consequent bigger berry sizes.

White wines are showing fresh and fruity qualities and red wines promise to be aromatic and very elegant.

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## **OLIFANTS RIVER**

### **Production trends**

The 2014 season was characterised by high disease pressure as a result of wet and humid weather conditions. Downy mildew and powdery mildew management produced many challenges as well as the occurrence of rot. Producers did an excellent job to limit damages to a minimum and ensuring good quality.

Everything suggests that the crop will be somewhat smaller than the record crop in 2013, although some vineyards still have grapes on them. A Bigger Sauvignon Blanc crop was

produced for the white cultivars with quite smaller yields for Chardonnay and Hanepoot and close to the same yields for Chenin Blanc and Colombar. The red grape crop is overall smaller, with a smaller yield with regards to Shiraz.

### **Climate and viticultural trends**

The post-harvest period until leaf fall continued as usual with no premature leaf fall.

The temperatures during April and May were in line with the long-term average. Leaves were therefore retained long enough for the accumulation of reserves. Above-average cold units were accumulated during the winter – the result of a cooler than normal winter and more than sufficient rainfall.

Bud burst occurred late with regards to most of the cultivars and was very uneven in Shiraz. Flowering and berry set occurred uneven in most of the cultivars. The initial slow shoot growth as well as the uneven flowering could be the result of a cooler than usual September and October.

November and December were however above-average warm with a great deal of rain. The pressure of diseases was consequently high and the vineyards started to show vigorous growth during this period after a very slow start.

The early cultivars matured late but the later cultivars matured on time. The two busy months of the harvest season were extremely diverse. February was very warm, with March being cooler than usual which led to the sugars of the late cultivars being lower than usual and some grapes maturing quite late.

### **General comments**

Downy mildew already caused some challenges early in the season and also on the young leaves later in the season. Powdery mildew also presented a problem later in the season in quite a few of the areas.

Snail damage was common, especially with the wetter seasonal conditions, whereas fruit flies were a minor problem. The river was in flood for a long time as a result of the higher than usual rainfall. This led to some vineyards being pruned much later than usual. Most of these block produced very little grapes.

Extreme heat during mid-February had a positive effect on destroying active downy mildew on the young leaves. The Clanwilliam dam was almost 100% full towards the end of November – more than sufficient water to last the producers through the season. Moist, vigorous growth conditions led to rot problems especially in Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc cultivars.

### **Grape and wine quality**

The quality of both the white and red cultivars looks promising with Pinotage being outstanding, despite initial challenges due to rot. Colour and grape analyses are also good, with juice recoveries generally in line with the average, despite the sporadic impact of rot.

Cellars quickly reached their peak intake capacity after the start of the harvest and were managed on account of the later harvest. Bottle-neck situations were less of a problem, since the crop was smaller and cellars were more prepared after the record crop in 2013.

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## **ORANGE RIVER**

### **Production trends**

The Orange River will be producing a much smaller crop than in 2013, partly due to the worst frost damage in the history of vineyard cultivation in the area. The crop is however much bigger as initially expected – once again proof that the recovery ability of the vines sometimes exceed one's expectations.

All the yields for the wine grape cultivars, excluding Villard Blanc and Hanepoot, were smaller than in 2013. The average yields for cultivars which had bud burst later, were less than those of early cultivars such as Chenin Blanc, since the latter was sensitive towards frost.

### **Climate and viticultural trends**

The first real cold weather only started in May and didn't last long without the presence of frost. Leaf fall started in mid-June.

Widespread rain occurred at the beginning of July across the entire lower Orange River area and average day and night temperatures were quite higher than usual until the end of July. Humidity levels were also high, with a great deal of dew in the morning.

Constant low temperatures occurred during August. Young vines which were planted the previous year, such as Merbein Seedless in specific, had died due to the cold weather conditions. A great deal of cold units was accumulated during August, although the total amount of cold units was lower than the previous year.

Earlier wine grape cultivars had bud burst in mid-September – about two weeks later than usual. Most cultivars had even bud burst with good budding percentages, especially on long bearer (Guyot pruned) vineyards. Fertility was good in most of the cultivars with both Colombar and Chenin Blanc mostly producing double bunches.

Widespread frost damage however occurred on the vineyards in the lower Orange River area due to the lowest average minimum temperatures in 126 years towards the end of September. Temperatures as low as -10°C were measured in certain places on Sunday morning, 22 September. The damage stretched as far as Groblershoop in the east to Blouputs in the west.

November and December were characterised by below-average maximum and minimum temperatures, with almost no rain. The first two weeks of January was however very warm.

The harvest season started at least two weeks later than usual on account of the cooler weather conditions during the main part of the growth season.

### **General comments**

The main contributing factor towards the smaller crop was the frost damage that occurred specifically in September. There was almost no rain since October until mid-January and the vineyards were very healthy. Frequent rain showers following this, gave rise to rot in certain blocks as well as downy mildew, which occurred quite commonly from mid-March. Powdery mildew however occurred late and widespread.

### **Grape and wine quality**

The quality of the grapes was consistently good in general up until March, after which it decreased as a result of frequent rain showers and consequent limited occurrences of rot.

Grape acidity and pH levels were exceptionally good this year which are already being reflected in the quality of the wines that were dry fermented. Colombar wines are very fruity

and Chenin Blanc is showing good mouth-feel and balance. Muscadel type wines are also showing great potential and we are expecting an end product with top quality. It has been a very long and extended harvest season which only concluded towards mid-April.

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## **PAARL (FRANSCHHOEK/PAARL/WELLINGTON)**

### **Production trends**

The Paarl region had an exceptional harvest this year with quite higher yields – especially in the dryland areas – as well as wines promising to have very good quality.

The wet winter and spring were followed by exceptionally strong growth conditions. Good berry set together with rain in November contributed towards above-average bunch weights. Yields for Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc were especially good this year. This year will be remembered for even ripening and a short season. The pressure of diseases, especially downy mildew, was very high and producers had to follow excellent preventative spraying programmes.

### **Climate and viticultural trends**

April was generally wet with good leaf retention and consequent accumulation of reserves. Powdery mildew occurred in some instances during the post-harvest period, which led to early leaf fall in some of the vineyards.

May started off very dry which influenced cover crops negatively. June and especially August were unusually cold and wet with higher than usual accumulated cold units towards the end of May and June, which complied with the need for cold units and created a good basis for even budding.

Average winter temperatures were lower than usual with the exception of July. The levels of irrigation dams were very favourable and soil water was replenished to field capacity.

Above-average cold and wet temperatures in August continued until September, which had an immense impact on budding dates. Vineyards which were treated with dormancy-breaking products, especially the late cultivars, experienced bud burst around the normal times, although the majority of vineyards were 7 to 10 days later than usual. There were already early indications that cultivars would have matured simultaneously. Bud burst was reasonably even, with the exception of some Sauvignon Blanc and Shiraz blocks.

The cold spring initially constituted slow shoot growth but the eventual warmer weather conditions led to above-average vigorous growth and therefore increased management techniques were necessary to prevent dense canopies. Wind damage was minimal which contributed towards luscious growth, together with high soil water levels.

Bunches had good set in general and minimal drooping was observed as well as very little berry shatter with regards to Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. Above-average rainfall during November and good berry set led to the bunches being exceptionally compact, which later contributed towards rot in some areas.

Vineyards started growing actively very late and most of the producers had to use topping techniques on vineyards in January to manage it. Weather conditions during the ripening process were initially moderate, followed by very warm conditions during mid-February.

### **General comments**

The wet spring caused the number of snails to increase and a few instances of trunk borer damage were observed in young vineyards. Effective weed control was challenging due to repeated rain showers which caused the pre-emergence herbicides to be less effective. Wet soil also had a negative impact on critically early sprays against powdery mildew.

Downy mildew presented a huge problem, especially after the November rainfall. Symptoms could still be observed on the young leaves at a later stage and a substantial part of the crop was damaged due to this. Powdery mildew occurred sporadically later in the season and sporadic instances of mealy bug presented a problem at a later stage.

### **Grape and wine quality**

The quality of the grapes was very good in general, with high acidity levels at the beginning of the season. Rot occurred sporadically in more dense blocks of Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. Red cultivars are generally showing promising, dark colours. Juice recoveries were significantly better, as well as in the dryland areas, which once again suggest good water supply and consequently better berry sizes. White wines show promising, fresh and fruity flavours and the fuller wines are very complex. We are expecting aromatic, elegant red wines, since grapes matured at slightly lower sugar levels in general.

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## **ROBERTSON**

### **Production trends**

We experienced a late and challenging vintage in the Robertson region, with good quality and average productions.

Yields for Pinotage and Chardonnay were overall much smaller as with Merlot, Chenin Blanc, Colombard and Shiraz, which also had a decrease in their yields, although productions varied in general. Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Ruby Cabernet delivered the same productions as in 2013.

Production losses were the result of *Botrytis* rot and rhizopus rot, due to heavy rain during January, after which the vineyards were dry and healthy in February. Powdery mildew infections led to berry cracking and consequent rhizopus rot in some of the blocks. Irrigation needs were much less due to these frequent rain showers.

### **Climate and viticultural trends**

Leaf fall generally occurred around the normal time, although it occurred early in most of the blocks as a result of late powdery mildew infections, which consequently led to less reserve accumulation. There were very little pests during this period.

Robertson experienced a good, cold winter. More than sufficient cold units were accumulated from mid-May to mid-June for the breaking of dormancy, although it started off late. Sufficient rainfall also occurred during the winter months. Producers who were dependent on mountain water started off the season with sufficient irrigation water.

Early budding cultivars had bud burst around the normal time and even a few days earlier. Exceptionally cold weather conditions, rain and snow however occurred during this time, which led to bud burst being delayed even more. Vineyards had simultaneous bud burst with uneven bud burst in blocks which experienced early leaf fall as a result of powdery mildew. The initial shoot growth was slow due to the cold weather conditions and we observed uneven growth in some vineyards. A few instances of frost damage also occurred.

The sufficient rain continued during September and October and berry set was overall good, despite the high rainfall during November. There were many bunches and the berries of the Chardonnay, Pinotage, Colombar, Merlot and Shiraz cultivars were particularly smaller than usual.

The rainfall continued in the summer with extremely high rainfall early in January. The average summer temperatures were normal.

*Véraison* occurred two weeks later than usual as a result of the cool spring and the early cultivars also experienced maturity about two weeks later. The late cultivars however matured only a few days later.

### **General comments**

The growth season was characterised by very high pressure of diseases, specifically with regards to serious instances of powdery mildew and less serious instances of downy mildew, which were managed effectively by the producers. Erinose also presented a major problem this year.

Rot however presented a problem rather early in the season – especially in Chardonnay and Chenin Blanc cultivars – but cleared up due to the dry weather conditions during February. Regions in the Bonnievale area however experienced serious hail damage.

The initial growth was slow and uneven but showed more vigorous growth than usual due to the great amount of rain during the spring. The season was relatively moderate, with single warm days but fortunately no prolonged periods of extreme high temperatures.

### **Grape and wine quality**

The quality of the wines is looking promising this year despite the rot in some early blocks. Sufficient acidity levels were reached later in the season but high levels of malic acid were typical. The pH levels were normal to higher than usual in general.

Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc are showing promising quality at this stage as well as the colours and quality for the red wines, which are also looking promising. Fortunately there were only a few rainy days and therefore not many disruptions during the harvest season. Juice recoveries were normal to high, as expected.

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## **STELLENBOSCH**

### **Production trends**

Stellenbosch produced an exceptional harvest this year with regards to yield and quality, together with one of the wettest seasons we had in years.

The harvest is estimated to be bigger than in 2013 with very good yields specifically for cultivars such as Sauvignon Blanc, which constitute a great part of the region's vineyards. Extreme high water supply during the cell division phase, good climate conditions during flowering and berry set as well as the absence of harmful winds, all contributed towards these good yields.

Most of the cultivars produced above-average crops with the exception of some Pinotage and Chardonnay blocks.

### **Climate and viticultural trends**

Leaf fall occurred as usual, due to sufficient post-harvest irrigation and consequent good leaf retention and accumulation of reserves.

Winter started in mid-May and sufficient cold units were accumulated during the following ten days. It was an unusually wet winter with higher rainfall than the 48 year average during June to August. Minimum temperatures were significantly lower than usual with the exception of June.

Bud burst occurred one to two weeks later than usual with even distribution, but with the exception of some Sauvignon Blanc and Shiraz blocks. Cold, wet weather conditions during bud burst and early spring caused initial slow shoot growth, after which it picked up after the first warm days at the beginning of October.

Flowering and berry set were good – especially for the early cultivars such as Pinotage, Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc – as a result of less than usual rainfall and average temperatures in October. Warmer temperatures and extreme high rainfall during November possibly had a negative effect on later cultivars such as Cabernet Sauvignon, which was flowering during this time.

Temperatures had risen significantly during December and by the end of the month the annual rainfall was the highest measured in 48 years. Both high soil water levels as well as high temperatures led to extreme vigorous growth conditions, which required the correct and timeous canopy management. The day and night temperatures varied to such an extent during January that it had a positive impact on the delay of the ripening process.

The harvest season kicked off later than usual. The extremely warm weather during mid-February accelerated the harvest and the simultaneous ripening of the different cultivars therefore placed immense pressure on cellar facilities. Frequent rain showers, especially during March, impeded the ripening process and cultivars such as Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon were harvested later.

### **General comments**

The pressure of fungal diseases was very high as a result of the wet weather conditions during the growth season and the fact that the soil remained wet for a long time. The heavy rain showers during mid-November worsened this and prevented the producers to administer fungal sprays at the right time. Downy mildew occurred at the beginning of the growth season and *Botrytis* rot had especially caused more visual damage than before.

Typical December winds were less common than usual and didn't cause any significant damage to the canopies. Irrigation was facilitated through good rainfall. Vineyards were irrigated later than usual and regular rain showers during the ripening process had reduced the frequency.

### **Grape and wine quality**

Juice recoveries of both white and red wine grape cultivars were higher than usual. Grape analyses were acceptable in general and cultivars generally reached maturity at lower sugar levels.

The pH levels were usually higher for the white cultivars, although the quality of the white wines however looks promising with good balance as well as fruity, green flavours.

Elegant red wines with exceptional quality and beautiful colours are expected despite higher yields. Higher temperatures could have caused the acidity of the red cultivars to be lower than usual.

## **WORCESTER**

### **Production trends**

The Worcester region produced above-average yields despite of a very challenging season.

The harvest will however be slightly smaller than the record crop in 2013 with lower yields, especially for Chenin Blanc, due to older vineyards. Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay as well as the late red cultivars produced more or less the same and in a few cases even had higher yields.

The 2014 vintage will be remembered for a particularly late season, summer rains and high pressure of diseases as well as fluctuating sugar levels in vineyards, vines and even bunches.

### **Climate and viticultural trends**

The post-harvest period was relatively dry and without any diseases, with the first rainfall in May. Leaf fall and the accumulation of reserves were therefore fairly normal. The winter period was characterised by frequent snow falls and sufficient cold units.

Vineyards experienced bud burst a few days earlier than usual. The budding process was overall even with uneven bud burst in some late cultivars such as Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon. The cold spring initially restricted the growth with snow present as late as the beginning of October and early frost damage occurring in isolated instances.

Cold conditions during the flowering period led to extreme uneven berry set with consequent occurrence of *millirandage*. South eastern winds targeted the region during November, followed by moderate weather conditions which led to vigorous growth. Canopy actions therefore focused on sufficient light penetration of the vineyards by means of suckering and leaf removal. The latter is also known as “defoliation” and is a process which has become increasingly mechanised.

The harvest season started about 10–14 days later than in 2013. It has been the first time in many years that no grapes were harvested in January, as a result of rain during this month which led to vigorous growth and was followed by cool and moderate weather conditions during the entire harvest season.

### **General comments**

The occurrence of rot caused by *Botrytis* rot is the greatest impact on this year’s harvest – the result of cooler, wetter weather conditions as well as the vigorous vineyards.

The rainfall during November increased the chances for diseases and the rain and thunder during January cause a great deal of damage due to downy mildew, powdery mildew and *Botrytis* rot, which ultimately led to crop losses, although the producers were generally up to date with the spraying programmes.

Early leaf losses occurred in many instances which had a negative impact on the sugar accumulation. The high occurrence of bud mite was problematic with unprecedented dimensions of erinose throughout the growth season.

The start of the harvest season was dry with sporadic rain showers later in the season, especially towards the end of March. Dew was present at night early in the harvest season

which lowered the sugar levels and also influenced the mechanical harvesting of grapes during the night.

We had two short heat waves during February which caused some sunburn damage due to the fact that the more vigorous vineyards were not protected against it, although it developed in a relatively cool growth season. The effect thereof on the final wine quality of Sauvignon Blanc, which was harvested during this period, is still to be determined.

**Grape and wine quality**

Grape analyses were good overall. There were a few tanks with high pH levels which could possibly be the result of *Botrytis* rot. The wine quality of early Chenin Blanc is exceptionally good.

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