



Newsletter South Africa - January 2018

The South African wine industry has reached a challenging stage in the vineyard season, considering the continuing drought and low water supplies in the Western Cape. This together with the first grapes currently harvested mainly for the making of sparkling wine.

A second crop estimate of the South African wine grape harvest was made in the second week of January. This estimate indicates a smaller grape harvest than previous surveys done at the end of November 2017. The crop is currently estimated at 1 195 838 tons, a 16.6% decline on the 2017 crop.

The reasons for the crop decline trend in the past two months are mainly attributable to the warm and dry weather conditions that occurred in early December. Virtually no rainfall fell during this period and many hot days (above 35°C) occurred. This, together with a southeast wind increased the water consumption of vineyards.

Most producers depend on irrigation water from the various irrigation schemes that have been rationed from the early 2017 growing season. Water quotas have been cut between 50 - 80%. This available water is simply not enough to meet the water needs of the vineyards at this stage. The latter now begin to show symptoms of water shortage and declining berry growth. Smaller berries mean a lighter harvest with lower juice levels contributing to lower volumes.

The lack of rain, water supplies that shrink and hot days that continue can further contribute to a declining 2018 crop.

The Olifants River region is the worst affected by the drought.

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