

SA wine producers expect smaller crop as harvest commences

With the 2022 harvest season on the horizon, South African wine grape producers expect a smaller wine grape crop, mainly due to a decrease in vineyards, high disease pressure and heatwaves in certain regions. This according to the second of four crop estimates by viticulturists and producer cellars in the third week of January.



Source: April Klein via [Unsplash](#)

"At this early stage, we expect this year's wine grape crop to be smaller than in 2021," says Conrad Schutte, manager of Vinpro's team of viticulturists who issues the crop estimates together with industry body SAWIS (South African Wine Industry Information & Systems).

"The South African wine industry is spread over a wide range of cultivation areas throughout the Western and Northern Cape, with often diverse climatic conditions. Because of this variation, the crop is estimated upwards and others downwards in the respective regions," says Conrad.

The harvest is estimated to be smaller in most wine grape growing regions, except for Stellenbosch, the Cape South Coast and Klein Karoo. Conrad attributes the overall decline in the 2022 wine grape crop to vineyards being uprooted in especially the Northern Cape, Olifants River and Robertson regions, as well as high downy mildew and powdery mildew infections in some of these regions. The ripening period was cooler than normal, but heatwaves in December and January caught some vineyards off guard, causing sunburn damage to grapes.

Wine grape producers experience a good season.

Winter conditions were excellent, characterised by mostly above-average cold units – as reflected by frequent snowfall on mountain peaks – along with higher-than-normal rainfall that supplemented groundwater levels. Due to a cool, wet spring, budding was seven to 14 days later than normal in general, but consistently good and even. The cool weather also delayed initial growth, but most vines caught up during flowering, which occurred about five days later than usual.

"There is always a great buzz around harvest time, and we are excited to build on the great quality wine grapes and wines that we've seen year on year in the vineyards and cellars," Conrad says. "We wish all of our producers, winemakers, viticulturists and their teams all the best for a prosperous 2022 harvest."

The next crop estimate by viticulturists and producer cellars will be released in the third week of February 2022.

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