

South Africa's vineyards show resilience amid seasonal challenges

Viticulture specialists have provided their second assessment for the upcoming 2024 wine grape harvest, presenting a detailed analysis of the current status of South Africa's vineyards. The statistics, adjusted to accommodate the influence of varied weather conditions throughout the growth period, indicate a projected national wine grape harvest slightly below the initial estimate but surpassing the yield of the 2023 harvest.



Source: bedrck via [Fxabay](#)

"While this estimate reflects a marginal 1.2% decrease from the initial December estimate, it remains notably higher than the 2023 harvest. Despite the slight reduction, the current projection for 2024 still falls below the five-year average," says Etienne Terblanche, head of consultation services at Vinpro.

Seasonal challenges and positive factors

Most wine-growing regions benefited from an excellent winter characterised by low temperatures, positively impacting vineyard winter rest. Above-average rainfall during winter replenished dams and groundwater reserves.

Spring brought challenges, with significant frost damage in Chenin Blanc and Colombar in the Worcester/Breedekloof areas. Excessive rainfall and floods, particularly in the Olifants River region, posed challenges, leading to high fungal disease pressure.

A drastic shift in conditions at the beginning of summer impacted vineyard response. Moderate to warm conditions and good groundwater status promoted growth, but downy mildew pressure was high, especially in the Paarl and Wellington region.

Hot and windy conditions in coastal areas like Stellenbosch, Cape Town, and Swartland during flowering and fruit set limited crop size. Late summer rains in the Cape South Coast, Robertson, and the Klein Karoo were, however, beneficial.

Production in the Orange River area is on track for recovery despite localised hail damage during the festive period. Late summer rains in this irrigated area are viewed positively.

"Initial feedback suggests an earlier and lighter harvest for early cultivars like Chardonnay, possibly influenced by the prolonged cool spring conditions. Mid-season cultivars like Pinotage, Shiraz, and Merlot show promise for a reasonable harvest," says Terblanche. "Changes in critical environmental conditions and water availability will impact the final ripening phase. Vineyard response will be closely monitored to inform the next round of estimates in February."

Larger crop and quality

"The larger crop combined with grape quality is great news as we enter 2024 and bodes well for our continued focus on consumers and growth markets," concludes Rico Basson, South Africa Wine CEO.

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