



SOUTH AFRICA WINE

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News release

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For immediate release

2026 SOUTH AFRICAN WINE HARVEST POSITIONS INDUSTRY FOR GLOBAL VALUE GROWTH

The South African wine industry has delivered a resilient, quality-driven 2026 harvest, overcoming significant climatic challenges to produce wines of exceptional quality, concentration and balance. Guided by advanced technical expertise and precise vineyard management, the vintage further reinforces South Africa's position as a producer of premium wines for global markets.

The season itself was defined by significant climatic variability, often described as a "pendulum season", shifting between dry conditions and periods of intense rainfall. A warm, dry growing phase supported strong vineyard development and fruit set, while well-timed rainfall in February provided vital relief to water-stressed regions but also introduced disease pressure in certain regions, requiring careful management. This was followed by heat spikes in March, which accelerated ripening and compressed harvest windows. These dynamics demanded precise vineyard and cellar interventions, ultimately resulting in smaller berries, concentrated flavours and excellent quality potential across most regions.

South Africa's 2026 grape harvest is estimated at 1.370 million tonnes, marking a moderate recovery from 2025. This measured increase follows a series of smaller vintages and reflects improved vineyard performance, while maintaining a clear focus on quality and value.

Despite the challenging conditions, early indicators point to excellent quality across key cultivars, with strong flavour concentration, balanced acids and sugars, and outstanding colour development in red wines.

A harvest defined by expertise under pressure

Dr Etienne Terblanche, Consultation Service Manager at Vinpro, emphasised the technical complexity of the season and the industry's response to it. "This was a highly variable and technically demanding season, requiring producers to make precise, informed decisions in both the vineyard and cellar. From canopy management and irrigation discipline to selective harvesting and careful sorting under disease pressure, the 2026 harvest highlights the depth of expertise across our industry. The result is wines with excellent balance, concentration and strong premium potential."

Producers were required to adapt continuously throughout the season – managing smaller berry sizes, responding to increased disease pressure following the February rainfall, and handling a compressed harvest window that placed significant pressure on cellar capacity and logistics. Strategic decisions such as separating fruit by quality, adjusting harvest timing, and maintaining optimal canopy balance played a vital role in preserving quality across cultivars.

HJ Basson, W de Wet, IFVDM du Toit, RM Jeftha, VS Kleynhans, S Marco-Thyse, MV Moosa,
TR Ramabulana (Chairman), JBR Reid, PB Retief, A Simonis, AW Smuts, A Vermooten

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Quality over quantity in a changing climate

The industry enters the 2026 marketing season against the backdrop of a highly competitive, oversupplied global wine market, where slower consumer demand, elevated inventory levels, and sustained pricing pressure continue to constrain growth and put margins under pressure. In this environment, South Africa's ability to deliver consistent quality across a broad range of styles and price points is increasingly important.

While the quality and scale of the 2026 vintage create greater market opportunity and flexibility, the industry remains focused on disciplined supply management, sustainable value growth and protecting long-term brand positioning rather than pursuing short-term volume gains through excessive discounting.

Rico Basson, CEO of South Africa Wine, reinforced the industry's strategic direction. "The challenge in the current market is protecting value in an environment where global oversupply and pricing pressure are driving increased competition. South Africa has clear strategies in place to steer these conditions responsibly, with a strong focus on premiumisation, market diversification, disciplined supply management and long-term brand positioning.

"Our strength lies in our ability to compete through quality, consistency and diversity across price points, rather than relying on unsustainable discounting. Importantly, around 60% of South African wine is consumed in the domestic market, while exports reach more than 120 countries globally, providing important market diversity and resilience as we continue to focus on long-term competitiveness and sustainable value growth."

Strong global positioning for South African wines

From an export perspective, the quality of the 2026 vintage reinforces South Africa's competitive positioning in key international markets.

Siobhan Thompson, CEO of Wines of South Africa (WoSA), commented, "Global markets are increasingly looking for authenticity, quality and consistency – and the 2026 vintage delivers on all three. The exceptional quality of this vintage reinforces South Africa's reputation as a producer of world-class wines and supports our ongoing efforts to grow value in export markets.

Despite a season marked by climatic extremes, South African producers and vineyard teams demonstrated remarkable adaptability, precision and resilience, delivering wines with outstanding concentration, balance and varietal expression, particularly across Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Pinotage and Cabernet Sauvignon. "What stands out in 2026 is not only the quality of the wines, but the expertise and capability behind them," says Thompson.

"This ability to consistently deliver under pressure speaks to the strength of our people, our continued investment in skills and knowledge, and a shared commitment to building a more competitive, sustainable and inclusive wine industry."

A confident outlook

The 2026 harvest represents a defining moment for South African wine – one that moves the conversation beyond resilience to opportunity.

Backed by exceptional quality and the proven capabilities of its people, the industry is well-positioned to elevate its standing in global markets. This vintage offers a powerful platform to showcase South Africa not only as a resilient producer but also as a confident and competitive leader in premium wine, delivering wines of distinction that stand alongside the best in the world.

For more detail on specific growing conditions and viticultural aspects per region, download the [2026 Technical Harvest Report](#) compiled by Vinpro.

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South Africa Wine

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