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## **Dry season might result in smaller wine grape harvest**

*South African Wine Harvest 2016*

The South African wine industry can expect a smaller wine grape harvest in 2016, should the dry seasonal conditions persist in November.

This is the message from the regional viticulturists of VinPro, the representative organisation for some 3 500 wine producers and cellars.

The winter and spring were drier than normal in many regions. A lower rainfall caused a decline in groundwater levels, and the majority of irrigation dams are between 40% and 60% full. "The heatwave that occurred in the last week of October, is also an anomaly at this time of the year and placed further pressure on water resources and available ground water, as the vineyards' water usage has increased drastically," said Francois Viljoen, manager of the VinPro Consultation Service.

Although the amount of flower clusters looks promising so far, continued drier weather conditions through the flowering and berry set stages could still result in a lower wine grape harvest than in 2015. According to Viljoen some dryland vineyards that flower later may already have been negatively influenced. "There is an urgent need for rain in during November," said Viljoen.

Producers in the Klein Karoo, Robertson, and the Overberg did receive good southeastern rainfall during the season however, but the dry conditions at the end of October may even have an effect on production here too.

Winter was cold enough to ensure good dormancy. Although bud break generally occurred evenly and on time, cultivars that usually bud later, like Sauvignon Blanc, had an even later and uneven bud break.

Producers uprooted more vineyards this year than they planted, and according to Viljoen the question of how long production can be maintained with a smaller, ageing amount of vineyards remains pertinent.

"One positive aspect of the drier season is how healthy the vineyards are this year. The prevalence of common fungal diseases and pests is very low thus far," Viljoen concluded.

The full report of seasonal conditions in the respective wine growing regions is available on [www.sawis.co.za](http://www.sawis.co.za).

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