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BI Daily

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RSA TRENDS

A new era for the South African agricultural sector in 2025

2024 has been a year of mixed fortunes for the agricultural sector. The mid-summer El Niño-induced drought negatively impacted summer crops, while events like the ongoing animal disease woes, the seemingly endless logistical crisis, high interest rates, and uncertainty about the national government all weighed heavily on the sector.

Importantly, the government continues to prioritise the diversification of export markets for South African agricultural produce. The South African agricultural sector is heavily reliant on exports, with half (by value) of agriproduce being exported. Our biggest export markets are Africa (40%), the Middle East and Asia (23%), the EU (19%) and the UK (7%). While our export markets are already diverse, agricultural produce will likely expand in the coming years, mainly due to previously underused land. That's why it's vital that the expanded BRICS member nations be pursued as added agricultural export markets – particularly China, India, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

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GLOBAL TRENDS

Georgia defies global wine production slump

Global wine production in 2024 has fallen to its lowest levels since 1961, according to new figures from the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV). Extreme weather events, including drought and hail, were major contributors to the sharp decline, which has left the wine industry grappling with challenges across traditional regions.

However, amid the global downturn, Georgia has emerged as a rare bright spot. With both quality and volume surpassing recent years, the 2024 Georgian wine vintage has been hailed as

“exceptional”. According to the Georgian National Wine Agency, the 2024 harvest was 20% above the five-year average and 27% higher than 2023, a year that saw significant losses due to hail.

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New trade system to benefit NZ wine exporters

A new trade certification system is being rolled out in New Zealand to support the country’s exports, positioning the wine industry to benefit under the recent European Union Free Trade agreement.

This “modernisation” of New Zealand’s trade certification system is designed to make the process of selling Kiwi products overseas more reliable and adaptable into the future, explained New Zealand’s Food Safety Minister, Andrew Hoggard. “Exporters have told us they want a system that is always available when they need it, easier to use and more flexible, that responds better and faster to new market requirements and emerging trends,” said Hoggard.

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Global wine production falls to lowest level since 1961

New figures from the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV) suggest that global wine production will reach just 231 million hl this year. Giorgio Delgrosso, head of statistics at the OIV, said: ‘This would represent a 2% drop from the already historically low 2023, and a 13% decline compared to the last 10-year average. ‘To find a smaller vintage than 2024, we must go back to 1961. The reasons seem quite clear: climate variability, with frosts, heavy rains and droughts, has severely impacted production.’

The OIV already has a clear picture of wine production in the Southern Hemisphere, which is estimated at 46 million hl for 2024. That represents a 2% drop compared to 2023, and it is also 12% below the five-year average, making it the lowest output in the last 20 years. Meanwhile, extreme weather has taken its toll in South Africa. Production is projected at 8.8 million hl, a 5% drop from last year, as the country was impacted by severe flooding and high disease pressure in several wine regions.

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Wine Drinkers Thirsty for Change

Watching the intelligent, in so many ways perfectly capable culture of wine grow and evolve is an exercise in (im)patient frustration, akin to watching a fat, grinning baby try to pick up a Cheerio and successfully put it in their gabbering mouth for the first time. It seems so simple. The steps seem so obvious. And yet.

While winemakers, members of the wine media, retailers and sommeliers hold conferences, conduct surveys and issue edicts designed to decipher the mystery of Gen Z – and, to a lesser degree, Millennials’ studied lack of interest in wine – the answer seems as old as time. Vintners who are making wine in truly unusual or new ways, without falling into the trendy tropes that have come to define progressive, young-gun winemaking, are finding new audiences among new and experienced wine lovers. But also without doing weird things just to be weird.

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