

**MEDIA RELEASE  
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**2008 NEW ZEALAND VINTAGE UNDERWAY**

- **2008 grape harvest forecast in line with expectations**
- **Exports grow 30% in volume and 24% in value in 2007**

The 2008 New Zealand grape harvest is underway and is forecast to produce between 225,000 and 245,000 tonnes of grapes, according to New Zealand Winegrowers.

The first grapes of the year were picked two weeks ago in Gisborne and the vintage will continue through until at least mid-May.

New Zealand Winegrowers chief executive officer Philip Gregan said the increased vintage will be welcomed by wineries given strong sales in the past year.

“In 2007 New Zealand wine exports grew strongly – they were up 24% in value to \$761 million and 30% in volume to 84 million litres. As a result of the strong demand, many leading wineries are now experiencing supply constraints with key varieties and they are eagerly looking forward to a larger vintage.

“The increased supply will drive further export growth in the year ahead, toward the forecast \$1 billion in 2010.

“Our forecast for a 2008 vintage of between 225,000 and 245,000 tonnes, up from 205,000 tonnes last year, is in line with our long-term expectations. The increased harvest is the result of a larger producing area - up 2,000 hectares from 2007 to 27,000 hectares - combined with a return to more normal yields in a number of regions after a cool flowering lowered the 2007 crops.”

The weather leading into the vintage has been favourable to date, Mr Gregan said.

“The grapes have benefited from the prolonged period of dry weather over the summer, and at this stage the prospects for a high quality vintage appear very good,” Mr Gregan said.

Mr Gregan emphasised that while prospects for the vintage look positive there was a very long way to go before all the grapes were harvested.

“The last of the grapes will not be harvested for at least another three months. Until then we will be hoping for a continuation of the favourable weather so that the vintage delivers on its early promise,” Mr Gregan said.

**ENDS**

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