NEW ZEALAND WINE
PURE DISCOVERY

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Vintage 2021: Smaller harvest of superb quality

Although the harvest was smaller than hoped for, the quality of the 2021 vintage is being described as exceptional throughout New Zealand's wine regions.

There were 370,000 tonnes of grapes harvested during the 2021 vintage, down 19% on last year's crop. Regions throughout the middle of the country – including Wairarapa, Marlborough, Nelson, and North Canterbury – were impacted the most, down over 20% on 2020. However, there was some variability across different parts of the country, with Central Otago the one region to increase its crop, up 21% on last year's harvest.

"While the quality is exceptional, the overall smaller harvest means many of our wineries will face tough decisions over who they can supply in their key markets. There is going to be some supply and demand tension because of this, with the shortfall in the crop equivalent to roughly 7 million 9 litre cases of New Zealand wine," said Philip Gregan, CEO of New Zealand Winegrowers.

Ongoing strong export performance reflects the appreciation that the world has for New Zealand wine, and reinforces the industry's reputation for distinct, premium, and sustainable wines.

"It is encouraging to see that during these uncertain times, consumers continue to choose a premium product they know that they can trust. Wines from vintage 2021 promise to be something special, but in some instances, the question may just be whether there is enough to go around."

The smaller crop is due to cooler spring weather and late frosts in some regions, and comes at a time when the industry is facing increasing production costs, with ongoing labour shortages also adding pressure.

Given the impact and associated difficulties of Covid-19 over the past year, the New Zealand wine industry is opposed to a looming increase in wine excise which would see the tax rise on 1 July. A major concern with this increase is the impact it will have on the approximately 300 small wineries who only sell in the domestic market.

"They have already been hit hard by the lack of international tourists post-Covid, surging production costs, and the difficulties being experienced in the hospitality sector. Adding to those stresses with yet another tax rise does not make sense right now," said Philip.

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Further vintage data can be found here.

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