



SOUTH AFRICAN  
WINE INDUSTRY COUNCIL

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## **MEDIA RELEASE:**

### **NO TO GMO IN THE WINE INDUSTRY**

The SA Wine Council meeting, under the new Chairperson, Professor Kader Asmal, has taken a number of decisions at its meeting on Monday 16 October, held in Stellenbosch, four of which are referred to in this statement.

#### **GMO research in the wine industry**

The SA Wine Council has decided to oppose a request to the Registrar: Genetically Modified Organisms to provide permission for the use of genetically enhanced malolactic yeast ML01 for the commercial production of wine in South Africa.

The South African wine industry has supported GMO research through its Winetech programmes as it is important to remain on the "cutting edge" of international research and technical innovation. Such research furthermore has to be strictly controlled through internationally accepted protocols. Therefore the Council will not support the use of GMO organisms in the commercial production of wine until such time as it is clear that this practice is internationally acceptable.

According to Professor Asmal, Chairperson, the Council, South African wine is completely GMO free and does not believe the time is ripe for such commercial applications and must therefore be rejected.

#### **Banning the "papsak"**

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Mr Dirk du Toit, has agreed to proceed with the request by the South African Wine Industry Council to change packaging regulations in the wine trade that will effectively ban the "papsak". "Papsak" represents the dumping-of-wine on the lower income groups in inferior packaging and containers. This could promote excessive consumption.

The SA Wine Council proposed the upgrading of wine product packaging to include "bag-in-the-box" and high quality plastic bottles.

Whilst acknowledging that "banning-the-papsak" will not be the full solution to alcohol abuse problems it is felt that it would go a long way in this direction. These will complement additional measures directly focusing on alcohol abuse problems,

South African Wine Industry Council, Association Incorporated Under Section 21, Reg No 2002/016972/08

Prof Kader Asmal (Chairperson); Dr Johan van Rooyen (Chief Executive Officer)

currently implemented by the industry through the Association for Responsible Alcohol Use (ARA).

Changes in regulations will now be considered by the responsible government department.

### **Trade in wines with an alcohol content of above 14%**

Trade in wines with an alcohol content of above 14% is currently under threat in South Africa due to inspectors of the Gauteng Liquor Authority raiding the premises of certain supermarkets and grocers in Gauteng instructing them to remove all wines with an alcohol content of higher than 14% from their shelves. These grocers however cannot stock wine separately for specific provinces only and indicated to wine producers that they will on a national basis not stock wine with an alcohol content higher than 14%. This has serious effects as:

- 21% of all certified South African wines have an alcohol content higher than 14%. This is in line with international wine making practices and definitions.
- 35% of all quality wines in South Africa are sold by grocers – the current situation therefore has a severe impact on the wine industry.

The legal situation in all provinces is currently under review to increase alcohol contents from 14% to 16.5% - the international norm for wine. In the Eastern Cape such changes have already been approved. The Gauteng Amendment Bill also proposes that the limit be increased to 16.5%.

The SA Wine Council has now approached the Gauteng government with an appeal to fall in line with the other provinces and not to enforce the 14% limit whilst waiting for their Amendment Bill to be passed by the legislature. The Western Cape government was recently approached by the SA Wine Council on this matter and did agree not to enforce the 14% plus ruling.

### **Inauguration of Freedom Day Lecture**

The Council has decided to inaugurate an annual Freedom Day lecture for the industry beginning in 2007. The inaugural lecture will be delivered by the Minister of Finance, Mr Trevor Manuel, M.P. in April 2007 on the theme of Challenges and Opportunities in the Wine Industry.

ENDS

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