

Distell has big impact on ethical wine production

By **Wendy Morley** on April, 7 2015 | Spirits & Tobacco



As South Africa's biggest player in the wine industry, Distell is playing a major role in ensuring ethical accreditation among South Africa's grape and wine producers. The company's general manager for grape and wine supply, Erhard Wolf, says Distell is assisting South Africa to carve a unique position within the highly competitive wine arena. "The country is already internationally renowned for highly progressive eco-sustainable wine growing and winemaking practices. Building our social sustainability further enhances our national reputation."



Wolf stated that all farms owned either in full or in part by Distell are accredited by the Wine and Agricultural Industry Ethical Trading Association (WIETA), as are all the grape suppliers producing for

the company's export brands. "By far the majority of our entire supply base is now WIETA-compliant and we have made accreditation a key performance indicator," says Wolf. According to a press release, Distell also produces several ranges certified by Fairtrade for promoting fair labor practices.

Last month, Rico Basson, CEO of producer organisation VinPro, was reported as saying that 26% of this year's Cape harvest was ethically accredited.



Distell is also working with its suppliers to implement viticultural practices aimed at promoting optimal ripening. While 2015's yield will not be at the same level of 2014's bumper crop, conditions have been good. Callie van Niekerk, Distell's chief winemaker, says 2015 is proving a very good vintage for the more tropical Sauvignon blanc wines, as well as for Chardonnays from the coastal regions and Chenin blancs from the inland regions, which are displaying great complexity of flavor. She says the reds, although still at a very early stage of development, are showing excellent color intensity, full, ripe flavours and soft tannins. "The dry conditions gave rise to smaller berries with good skin to fruit ratios and we are very excited by the wines in development."