



MINISTER
AGRICULTURE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X250, Pretoria, 0001; 20 Steve Biko Street, Pretoria, 0001
Tel.: 012 319 6000; Email: queries@nda.gov.za; Web: www.nda.gov.za

Opening Address by Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen CapeWine 2025, CTICC Cape Town

10 September 2025

Distinguished guests, international buyers and media, winemakers, growers, farmworkers, partners from across Government and industry, welcome to CapeWine 2025.

“Our Warmest Welcome” is more than just this year’s theme. It is who we are. It is the feeling of a Sunday lunch with friends, the table loud with laughter, the roast still steaming, and a bottle (or two) of South African wine being passed around, before the stories even begin. It is the spirit of a sector that has weathered drought, the pandemic, blackouts and global uncertainty, and still chooses generosity, excellence and hope.

Today, we open South Africa’s cellars to the world once again. You are home.

Resilience: Written on the rings of our vines

In the last decade, our wine industry has been tested like few others. The three-year drought from 2015 to 2018 tightened its grip. Then came COVID-19 and hard lockdowns that shuttered tasting rooms, froze tourism, and restricted local trade. Load-shedding complicated everything, from irrigation and cellar management to cold chains and hospitality. And yet, here we are: leaner, smarter, more determined and, I would argue, more united than ever.

Against these headwinds, the South African wine value chain still supported over 270 000 jobs in 2022, with 85 962 of those on farms and in cellars; and contributed roughly R56 billion to the gross domestic product (GDP), close to 1% of the national economy. That is resilience you can measure.

We are a serious player in world wine. South Africa accounts for 3,9% of global wine production and 3,6% of world wine exports, ranking sixth by wine exported, eighth by volume



produced, and fifteenth by area under vine. These are the footprints of a country that, despite adversity, keeps walking forward.

In 2024, our industry sold R35,7 billion worth of wine, about 40% exported (306 million litres, R10,3 billion FOB), and 60% enjoyed at home. Every day, about 17 million glasses of South African wine are raised around the world. That is not just commerce; that is connection, millions of tiny toasts to South Africa, every single day.

Tourism is the other heartbeat. Wine tourism contributed an estimated R9,3 billion to the GDP and over 40 000 jobs in 2022. When visitors come to our valleys, they do not just taste wine; they taste our welcome.

Transformation: “Not yet where we want to be, but certainly on the journey”

Transformation is not a line item for this industry, it is a living journey. We are candid: we are not yet where we want to be. Nevertheless, the journey is real, measurable and accelerating. Today there are 107 Black-owned wine brands and 81 Black-owned farms in our ecosystem: entrepreneurs and growers building equity, know-how, and intergenerational opportunity. The Wine Arc—a public-private partnership and business incubator—has become a home for emerging brands and a platform for market access. In 2024, direct industry investment of R14 million helped unlock a further R19 million in donor funding for inclusive growth. Three Black-owned cellars are in various stages of development, with one already under construction—a milestone for ownership and production capacity.

Skills matter, too. The industry’s Learner Management System now brings employers, learners and providers together; participation grew by 29% in 2024. The South African Wine Industry Professional Body (SAWIPB) has been established to set standards, recognise occupations, and professionalise careers across the value chain—growing from 40 to 402 members in a single year. These are the invisible trellises that hold a vineyard of talent upright.

In addition, transformation is also ethical and social. This sector deepened its partnership with WIETA, strengthening ethical trade standards, pre-audit support and certifications. Several Black-owned enterprises achieved WIETA accreditation in 2024, while targeted funds helped more than 10 farms attain or maintain compliance. Inclusion means people being treated with dignity, workplaces that are safe, and communities that are stronger because wine is produced there.

Sustainability: Stewards of place

South African wine has a proud record of aligning quality with responsibility. From soil health and water stewardship to biodiversity corridors and ethical labour standards, we have worked to prove that world-class wine grapes can be grown and made in ways that protect the land and uplift people. The expansion of WIETA support and accreditation is one pillar; the growing adoption of climate-smart practices in vineyards and cellars is another. Sustainability is not a slogan; it is our licence to operate for generations to come.

Brand South Africa: Quality in the glass, warmth in the welcome

There is a reason global tastemakers speak with such affection about South African wine—quality. From elegant Chenin to age-worthy Cabernet, from Cap Classique to site-driven Pinotage, our wines punch far above their price. The value-to-quality ratio is frankly exceptional, and the world is noticing.

Nevertheless, there is a second reason: Our people. We are kind, fun and friendly. We laugh easily. We share stories. We make space at the table. This warmth is not a marketing line; it is cultural DNA. And it matters: a visitor who is treated warmly becomes a lifelong advocate. When they go home, they take our wines, and our story, with them.

That is why we continue to push for deeper market access. Industry has partnered with Government to address tariff headwinds in key growth markets, including Japan, where South Africa is exploring World Trade Organization-compliant avenues to reduce duties and unlock potential. This is the hard, technical work behind every new listing and every new market because Brand South Africa deserves the broadest possible stage.

Partnership: How we win

Over the past two years, partnership has been our engine. With South Africa Wine, we have co-funded the Wine Arc with the ARC and the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, giving emerging brands a home and a route to market. With Wines of South Africa (WoSA) and Wesgro, we have brought international buyers to the Cape and taken our producers to key trade platforms. With the South African Wine Industry Professional Body (SAWIPB), we have professionalised skills pathways across vineyards, cellars and marketing. We've expanded ethical compliance through WIETA support and, with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, advanced market-access work such as the Japan tariff brief. Government cannot make wine—and industry cannot make policy; together, we blend resources and capability to grow jobs, exports and inclusion.

Every partnership is a bridge between where we are and where we intend to be: an industry that is globally admired, locally inclusive, environmentally responsible and economically indispensable.

Looking ahead: Growth with heart

So, where do we go from here?

Firstly, we double down on quality and distinctiveness. The world is crowded; authenticity cuts through. We lean into origin, site and story. We let the Cape speak in the glass.

Secondly, we keep making room for new owners, new makers, new professionals. The pipeline from classroom to cellar to leadership must be clear and supported.

Thirdly, we scale sustainability, not only because the planet demands it, but because consumers reward it and because it is the right thing to do.

Fourthly, we accelerate market access, striking smart trade solutions, marketing with intent, and meeting buyers where they are.

Do that, and the numbers will follow: more visitors, more exports, more investment, more jobs. Remember, in 2024 we produced 884 million litres of product, with R35,7 billion in total sales; this base can grow if we keep turning excellence into opportunity.

“Our Warmest Welcome”

Let me end where we began.

“Our Warmest Welcome” is a promise: that whether you are a first-time visitor from Tokyo, a sommelier from Toronto, a retailer from Berlin, or a family from Bellville on a Saturday afternoon, South Africa will greet you with a smile, pour something beautiful for you, and send you home with a story.

It is also a commitment: that as we build a more inclusive, sustainable and competitive industry, we will keep our welcome warm, because hospitality is not a tactic; it is who we are.

To every farmer and vineyard worker who coaxed fruit from drought-baked soils; to every cellar team that kept fermentations stable through load-shedding; to every marketer who told our story around the world; to every partner who invested time, capital and belief, thank you.

To our international guests: may you discover new favourites this week, make new friends, and carry South Africa in your heart long after your suitcase is packed. When you pour a glass back home, we hope it tastes like sunshine on sandstone, like fynbos on the breeze, like a welcome that never ends.

CapeWine 2025 is open. From our valleys and mountains, from our vineyards and cellars, from our people to yours: Our Warmest Welcome.

-End-

For media enquiries, please contact:

Ms Joylene van Wyk

Ministry of Agriculture Spokesperson

joylenev@nda.gov.za / 063 298 5661

Issued by: The Ministry of Agriculture