SAUVIGNON BLANC 2.0

Public Summary - September 2026

Thousands of new Sauvignon Blanc clones were pruned over winter to prepare them for the coming growing season and collect material for propagation. Results from the first season of powdery mildew and water-use efficiency screening were analysed to guide further testing. Promising candidates have been identified and will be reassessed in future seasons to confirm their improved performance.

Work now focusses on preparations to test approximately 6,000 unique clones against industry-prioritised trait criteria over the growing period. Systems for recording results and tracking individual vines were enhanced, and an initial drone survey mapped the breeding vineyard for future image-based assessments. Ongoing frost-susceptibility research has established methods for measuring freezing responses, and a PhD student is being recruited to develop practical screening approaches for the Programme at the University of Canterbury.

More than a thousand clones are now mature enough to provide buds and grafting wood for further propagation. Material is being prepared for field trials in Marlborough, where industry partners have confirmed their ability to host vines. Four propagation methods will be compared to inform future planting.

The programme has also begun working with stakeholders on the commercialisation pipelines necessary for improved vines to eventually achieve industry impact, including understanding propagation capacity, customer demand, and technical evidence of vine performance.

Key highlights and achievements

- Analysed initial screening results to guide candidate selection.
- Prepared workflows to expand powdery mildew and water-use efficiency screening to approximately 6,000 vines.
- Assigned digital identities and physical tags to all planted vines, strengthening traceability.
- Completed an initial drone vineyard survey, mapping all planted vines.
- Confirmed hosts and collected plant material for pre-commercial field trials in Marlborough.
- Progressed commercialisation pipeline scoping through industry consultation.

Upcoming Focus Areas

- Expand seasonal screening and repeat assessments of promising candidates.
- Finalise trait-selection criteria and identify groups of vines for further evaluation.
- Plant the remaining approximately 1,300 vines and maintain the breeding vineyard through summer.
- Establish secondary collections in Marlborough and compare propagation methods.
- Continue developing practical frost-screening and image-based assessment methods.
- Assess additional trait opportunities and refine the pathway towards commercial use.

Investment

Investment period	Industry cash	Industry in-kind	MPI cash	Total investment
During this quarter	$ 291,996	$ 11,912	$ 202,605	$ 506,513
Programme to date	**$ 5,978,812**	**$ 491,373**	**$ 4,313,457**	**$ 10,783,643**