

SAUVIGNON BLANC 2.0

Public Summary - March 2024

Summary of progress during this quarter

The production rate of new Sauvignon Blanc clones over the summer has continued to increase, as plant growth media have been further optimised. At approximately 60 cm in height, the most mature vines are already demonstrating unique traits indicative of the underlined genetic changes among them. The new clones appear healthy and have been growing rapidly, with the bases of their stems beginning to show sufficient lignification ahead of autumn.

With the reference Sauvignon Blanc genome assembled and fully annotated, DNA extracted from the first of the new clones is now being sequenced. This sequence data will be used to understand their unique genetic traits and to accelerate the selection of vines with traits prioritised by the New Zealand wine industry.

Key highlights and achievements

- The new Sauvignon Blanc clones are showing rapid growth, with the earliest of the new vines appearing to progress beyond juvenility and establishing a good amount of lignified wood.
- A trial of new robotic technology for identifying mildew-resistant vines proved to be a promising tool for screening large numbers of plants in the future.
- Test wines from previously established trial vineyards have demonstrated that wines made from the new clones are similar in style to the original variety.

Upcoming

- Tissue culture plantlets received late in the season will be deflasked (gradually progressed from their sterile environment into the soil) and potted in an indoor growth environment.
- DNA preparation and sequencing will be expanded to a larger cohort of new Sauvignon Blanc clones, to improve efficiencies for genetic selection.
- Arrangements will be made for disease-resistant grapevine varieties to be imported into quarantine, to enable genetic resistance traits to be characterised in New Zealand.

Investment

Investment period	Industry cash	Industry in-kind	MPI cash	Total investment
During this quarter	\$ 314,379	\$ 10,096	\$ 216,317	\$ 540,792
Programme to date	\$ 2,161,247	\$ 154,698	\$ 1,543,963	\$ 3,859,908