

SAUVIGNON BLANC 2.0

Public Summary - September 2023

Summary of progress during this quarter

As a result of the plant production failure identified last quarter, the Programme end date has been delayed by 18 months until April 2030. Plant and Food Research Ltd. have agreed to bear the cost of replacing the plants produced to date and have reached a financial settlement agreement that will ensure the programme funders are not asked to bear additional costs resulting from the delayed milestones. Production of replacement Sauvignon Blanc vines is now well underway and is being scaled up to enable up to 6,000 new vines to be produced in the coming season.

Work to fully understand the genetic basis of NZ Sauvignon Blanc has progressed well, with the team completing the assembly of a Sauvignon Blanc reference genome of exceptional quality, achieved through the use of the unique Oxford Nanopore DNA sequencer imported specifically to support the programme. This capability is also advancing other local research, with BRI delivering nanopore sequence data to more than a dozen research programmes spanning human health to conservation.

Key highlights and achievements

- DNA-based grapevine varietal ID testing has been improved so that tests can be rapidly performed directly on leaf-press cards.
- The first of the new Sauvignon Blanc vines have been transferred to pots.
- We have started to identify the location of individual genes in the new SB reference genome, to help track novel genetic traits among new vines.
- The comparison of five commercial Sauvignon Blanc vines at a whole-genome level demonstrates the rate and type of genetic variation naturally occurring within NZ Sauvignon Blanc.
- Collaborations have been formalised with European grapevine breeding teams and international standards for genetic and trait-based data have been adopted.

Upcoming

- Sauvignon Blanc plantlet production will be accelerated, and new plantlets transferred to the greenhouse for maturation.
- Annotation of the reference genome with known and predicted gene features will be completed.
- Screening tests for prioritised physiological traits will be tested and optimised using pilot populations of vines.
- BRI will host the second annual Programme Grantors' Workshop in Blenheim.

Investment

Investment period	Industry cash	Industry in-kind	MPI cash	Total investment
During this quarter	\$ 210,071	\$ 6,670	\$ 144,494	\$ 361,235
Programme to date	\$ 1,693,190	\$ 128,617	\$ 1,214,538	\$ 3,036,345