SAUVIGNON BLANC 2.0

Public Summary – June 2025

Summary of progress during this quarter

Over Autumn the first 6,000 vines in the Breeding Vineyard were managed to optimise rapid maturation and preparation for dormancy. Samples have been collected from the most mature vines to enable three different propagation strategies to be tested in the summer. Meanwhile, cell cultures for Year 5 have been established and are showing good potential for the remaining plant production and expansion of the vineyard infrastructure has begun.

Tests for markers of superior water use efficiency among new clones are progressing in the nursery and new international experts have been engaged to provide technical input to guide these. Protocols have been put in place to establish pathogen cultures and to assess disease tolerance and resilience traits in new vines at scale. Engagement with growers remained strong through Grape Days events and ongoing policy work with New Zealand Winegrowers.

Key highlights and achievements

- DNA quality control was completed for the new vine population, enabling genetic selection to begin.
- Automated mildew screening pipelines were implemented using the Blackbird imaging platform and local mildew samples, which are being grown for plant testing.
- Physiological screening of other traits was advanced, including drought response and phenology tracking.
- Plant production is progressing well, with Sauvignon Blanc cell cultures demonstrating suitability for regenerating whole plantlets and vineyard operations progressing as planned.
- Strong industry engagement through Grape Days and continued collaboration with New Zealand Winegrowers on an updated gene-technology policy.

Upcoming focus areas

- Compare high-throughput sequencing strategies and commence population-scale genotyping.
- Expand automated mildew assays and apply machine-learning analysis to digitised results.
- Complete drought-pilot measurements and define biomarkers for vineyard-scale screening.
- Prepare material and confirm sites for Marlborough pilot plantings in Spring 2025.
- Continue industry education on new gene technologies alongside member consultation on draft policy.

Investment

Investment period	Industry cash	Industry in-kind	MPI cash	Total investment
During this quarter	$ 589,138	$ 21,600	$ 407,159	$ 1,017,897
Programme to date	$ 4,186,730	$ 256,709	$ 2,962,292	$ 7,405,731