

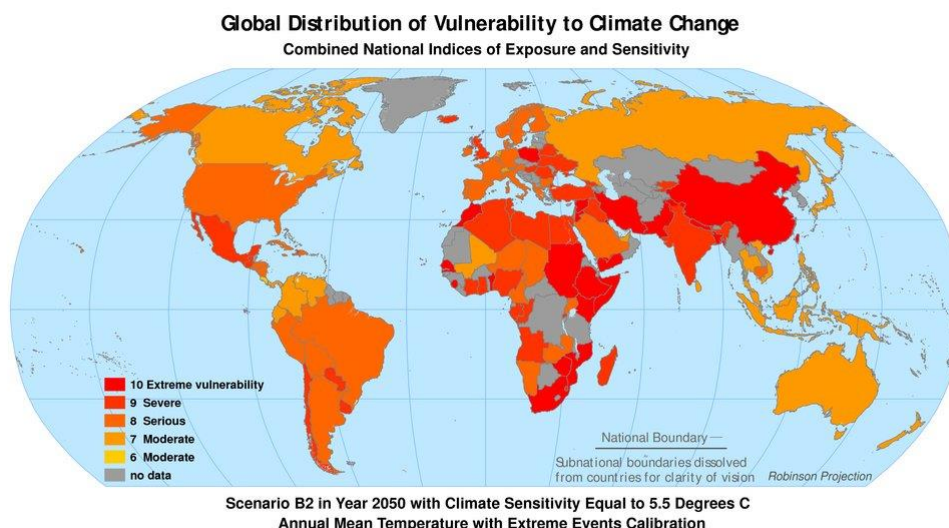


Climate change and the effects on the wine industry in South Africa

The wine industry in South Africa has transformed into a very important business area. The wine industry amounts to 20% of the export of agricultural products and is still growing. But also South Africa and its wine production are already effected by climatic changes.

Let me list some facts about this industry. According to SAWIS (South African Wine Industry & Systems 2011) there are 54 cooperatives, 493 private wine estates, 26 producing trade houses, and a total of 573 wineries in South Africa. Production capacity was increased during the last years. The share of table wines has increase from 62% to 80% within the last few years. Exports have risen from 12,5% of the total harvest to now 50%. The internal market is rather small and consumption decreasing.

Carter (2006) has created climatic modes for South Africa in his scientific report. According to these models precipitation during winter months (2046 – 2065) will be reduced specially at the beginning of the raining season in the regions of Stellenbosch, Paarl and Franschhoek. At the same time general temperatures will rise in the South Western Cape by 1,5 °C to maximal 3 °C. In general conditions in 2050 will be warmer and drier for South African wine estates. Please mind that in general by 2050 temperatures will rise by about 0,93 °C in the Southern hemisphere and 1,31 °C in the northern hemisphere.



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Diagram: World wide effect of extreme temperature increase until 2050 (source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change IPCC)

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Picture: region of Franschhoek

The key for coping with climatic changes lies within the following points (Nick Vink, report on climatic changes 2013):

- Understanding climate changes including micro climatic effects (plants) and meso climatic effects (vineyard), to adapt to this new environment.
- The specific potential for wine production.
- Row orientation for planting.
- Adaption on the vineyard in regards to watering, treatment of the ground and management of leaves.

The majority of South African wines are sold in the low price category. Most of the popular basic wines are from producers and cooperatives around the Western Cape. These wines are treated by traders and exporters. The wines therefore have their origin in different wine growing areas.

Ironically South Africa will benefit from the lesser importance of terroir and wine estates. Wholesale traders are more flexible in adapting to regional and seasonal climatic changes. Therefore the best concept for South Africa in regards to the climatic changes is to exactly keep this existing flexibility.

Vomp, May 2014

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