

Nederburg granted WWF Conservation Champion status

Nederburg Wines has acquired WWF Conservation Champion status for its water stewardship measures. These measures address ways to improve water quality; balance, access, usage - including sanitation - and governance.



Image Supplied.

The water management strategy it follows is based on the principles set out by the internationally recognised Alliance for Water Stewardship.

Nederburg was originally accorded WWF Biodiversity and Wine Initiative (BWI) membership in 2011 for its eco-conscious wine-growing and winemaking protocols, and since then the popular South African wine brand has been on a path to better its eco-sustainability credentials.

"It's very encouraging to have earned the highest level of WWF recognition of champion status for what we've been doing," says Niël Groenewald, managing director of Nederburg. "We've had to adhere to rigorous criteria and show innovation in how we manage our natural resources. We're proud of what we've achieved but there's no place for complacency. We plan to become even better at what we're doing."

Measures for greater accuracy

Groenewald explains that to begin the effective water stewardship process required investment in sophisticated water consumption measurement tools so it could calculate precisely the impact of its cover crops planted in and amongst the vineyards, the wider application of drought-resistant rootstocks, the greater use of water-stress deficit irrigation, the use of pressure bombs to measure leaf water respiration, the move towards night irrigation, as well as the introduction of several climate-resilient Mediterranean varietals.

"Many of these measures have been in place for well over a decade but to assess the efficacy of our initiatives required that we begin measuring with greater accuracy. We've determined that in some instances we've achieved water savings of as high as 40%. That inspires us to save even more."

Efficient water management

Groenewald also highlights how the team has worked to improve the management of streams and drainage lines that run through the farm, while continuing with the rehabilitation of the land to indigenous habitat.

"In the cellar, we are using recycled water for the cooling tanks, applying more efficient chilling processes and rigorously following water-wise cleaning regimes to eliminate water wastage. We've stepped up our rain-water harvesting and are diverting filtered effluent water to irrigate our extensive gardens."

Apart from Nederburg's water stewardship credentials, the winery has been recognised for its waste management, with all surplus material like cartons, bottles, plastic and harvest by-products recycled; as well as fire management with the winery being an active member of the Winelands Fire Protection Association (FPA).

Nederburg is ISO14000 certified for responsible environmental management and constantly keeps track of its fossil fuel usage in order to control its environmental footprint.

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