Media Release

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Helping future-proof the wine sector

Winegrape growers around the world will be better able to navigate future global markets and the impacts of climate change with a new book available free online.

*Which Winegrape Varieties are Grown Where? A Global Empirical Picture* provides snapshots from 1990 to 2016 of the world’s vineyard bearing areas of more than 1700 prime grape varieties in over 700 wine regions.

The book is an update and expansion of a 2013 edition. Presented for the first time are data on the climatic conditions of each region. This will allow grape growers to benchmark their varietal mix against those in regions with a climate similar to the predictions for their region’s future, helping winemakers to future-proof their vineyards and business practices.

“This book will help growers and winemakers to identify varieties that have been successful elsewhere in similar climatic conditions, and thus help them plan with more certainty,” says co-author Professor Emeritus Kym Anderson, Executive Director of the University of Adelaide’s Wine Economics Research Centre. “Understanding the predicted climatic changes in your region, and then being able to identify grape varieties that do well under those conditions, can be a game changer.”

*Which Winegrape Varieties are Grown Where? A Global Empirical Picture* has been supported by Wine Australia.

Wine Australia General Manager Research, Development and Adoption Dr Liz Waters said the expanded book provides critical information and analysis to support future planning for the Australian wine sector.

“Applicable and accurate data are enormously important for the wine sector to understand patterns of change so that we can plan effectively for a profitable future. This updated edition is an invaluable resource that not only assists our sector to see the developments in production on a local and global scale, but also to analyse the changes in comparable regions,” Dr Waters says.

Professor Anderson says: “When planning or re-planting a vineyard, a wine grower’s choice of winegrape variety depends on expectations about production costs and marketability in 10–30 years’ time. Costs can depend on how their region’s climate will change, and marketability depends on the variety’s popularity – or perhaps its market novelty.

“Climate change brings unpredictability. A region’s growing conditions – access to water and regional temperatures – are likely to change as the globe’s climate systems alter. Selecting grapes that will be able to withstand these challenges, and still thrive in the market many years’ from vineyard replanting is difficult.”

The book also reveals how exotic each country’s vineyards are, and how widespread each country’s native varieties are abroad.

The data show that while plantings have become much more international over the past three decades, the extent of varietal diversity both nationally and globally has shrunk. That is, notwithstanding the hype about ‘alternative’ varieties, half the world’s plantings were accounted for by 21 prime varieties in 2000 but, by 2016, it required only 16 varieties.

Between 1990 and 2016, the share of plantings of French prime varieties nearly doubled, rising from 21 per cent to 39 per cent, while the shares of Italian and Spanish varieties in the global vineyard each fell by roughly one-third. The popularity has grown especially rapidly for Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay and Syrah/Shiraz.

“For winemakers interested in looking to establish a unique proposition with one of the rarer grapes, there is plenty of opportunity to do so,” says Professor Anderson. “This is so because national wine markets are so much more open now than three decades ago. As a result, wine consumers have never had such a wide range to choose from, even if the range of varieties from local producers has narrowed.”

adelaide.edu.au
Which Winegrape Varieties are Grown Where? A Global Empirical Picture (2nd Ed) by Kym Anderson and Signe Nelgen is freely available from the University of Adelaide Press website. The database is online via the University of Adelaide’s Wine Economics Research Centre. Physical copies of the book will be available via Amazon’s print-on-demand services and other online bookshops from late-September 2020.

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About Wine Australia
Wine Australia supports a competitive wine sector by investing in research, development and adoption (RD&A), growing domestic and international markets, protecting the reputation of Australian wine and administering the Export and Regional Wine Support Package. Wine Australia is an Australian Commonwealth Government statutory authority, established under the Wine Australia Act 2013, and funded by grape growers and winemakers through levies and user-pays charges and the Australian Government, which provides matching funding for RD&A investments.

About the University of Adelaide
Ranked in the top 1% of universities worldwide and located in the heart of the world’s 10th most liveable city, the University of Adelaide offers the rare combination of elite academic performance and an unrivalled quality of life. Our 1700 research academics and 2300 research students work to find innovative solutions to world problems and industry challenges. Our key areas of focus are in the fields of agriculture, food and wine, defence and security, med-tech and health, environment and sustainability, mining and energy, and society, culture and the economy.