



*Media Statement*

**Date: 17 November 2021**

## **AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH COUNCIL MAKING STRIDES IN FACILITATING TRANSFORMATION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WINE INDUSTRY**

Despite being one of the leading wine producing countries in the world, black and emerging winemakers are disproportionately low in South Africa. The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) took action and highlighted the need for concerted efforts to accelerate this transformation paradigm in order to re-position the South African Wine Industry as inclusive and diverse for the next generation.

The Agricultural Research Council is very well positioned as a capable body to help in the effective and accelerated transformation of the Wine Industry through technology transfer, training, research, and capacity development. This is evident by the partnership that the premier science institution has created with the South African Wine Industry Transformation Unit (SAWITU) and other champions for transformation in the wine industry.

A major win on this collaborative journey is the housing of The Wine Arc, a one of a kind 'brand home' for black-owned wine enterprises, at the ARC Nietvoorbij Cellar Complex in Stellenbosch. The brand home will have a warm and welcoming ambience that reflect the nature of the diverse South African people. "It will be a place where people are comfortable, feel at home and that they belong", says Wendy Petersen of SAWITU.

In her opening address at the launch of The Wine Arc, Chairperson of the ARC, Ms Joyene Isaacs said, "Creative partnerships form the core of this beautiful event, and collaboration is critical not only for the wine industry but for South Africa as well as the ARC. We have to work together and we need to think out-of-the-box for the benefit of our people".

Over the last few years, the ARC invested in the upgrade of our winemaking facilities, tasting room and sensory evaluation lab and has embarked on a number of projects to: i) engage with aspiring young and previously disadvantaged winemakers; ii) have constructive dialogue pertaining to redressing the Apartheid legacy in the industry; and iii) afford black winemakers an opportunity to share their experiences and endeavours within the wine industry.

The Agricultural Research Council held its inaugural National Emerging Winemakers Symposium (NEWS) Indaba in 2018 with the vision is to share knowledge and to learn from one another – both to enable growth within the industry and to benefit the broader South African society. The symposium was a precursor to the ARC’s Nietvoorbij Cellar Complex housing The Wine Arc.

The refurbished cellar complex was officially re-opened in 2019, along with our new Nietvoorbij wine brand which tells a story of growth, transformation and the freedom to explore and soar in the wine industry.

“The Agricultural Research Council’s Nietvoorbij Cellar Complex endeavours to contribute towards the training and development of previously disadvantaged and emerging wine entrepreneurs, with experimental and commercial projects in place to be a model for next generation innovation, wine making and wine cellar technologies in South Africa” says ARC Acting CEO, Dr Hilton Vergotine.



Photo 1: ARC Chairperson, Ms Joyene Isaacs, giving her opening address at the launch of The Wine Arc.

Photo 2: Prof Bongani Ndimba (Senior Manager Research: ARC Infruitec-Nietvoorbij) showcasing our Nietvoorbij wines to the National Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza.

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**About the Agricultural Research Council**

The Agricultural Research Council is a premier science institution that conducts research with partners, develops human capital and fosters innovation in support of the agricultural sector. The ARC provides diagnostic, laboratory, analytical, agricultural engineering services, post-harvest technology development, agrochemical evaluation, consultation and advisory services, food processing technology services as well as various surveys and training interventions. For more information visit the ARC website at: [www.arc.agric.za](http://www.arc.agric.za).

For more information on the **South African Wine Industry Transformation Unit**, contact Wendy Petersen, Operations Manager, at [info@witu.co.za](mailto:info@witu.co.za) or visit the SAWITU website at [www.witu.co.za](http://www.witu.co.za)