



BRENN-O-KEM

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Results of PlantosVerde on organic wine grapes and olives

In the Western and Northern Cape, we are suffering from a severe drought that directly affects every player in agriculture. There are different ways how this drought has been handled by farmers so far. Some in the fruit industry pulled out their old orchards in order to have water available only for the younger orchards, others were forced to plant considerably fewer onions in the case of vegetables than initially planned and this led to fewer seasonal workers been employed. There were also unfortunately the farmers where all the other options ran out and the only point of departure was to sell their farms, but this option is not so easy because first of all that land is part of the farmer's being and that is all that a lot of them know, but the other problem is who is going to buy land in the middle of a drought. So water is the one big factor that plays a role in any farming, no matter what you farm with.

However, the positive side of the drought (if there can be such a thing) is that farmers are forced to think more innovatively to make plans to manage water better or make their farm more "water wise". Of course, this comes at a price in most cases. However, I was introduced to the product Plantosverde in the 2015/2016 season (when we also experienced the mercilessness of a drought). Mr Tiaan Ras from Kadima between Tulbagh and Wolseley contacted me and told me about the product and suggested that I test it on the olives. I sprayed the olives somewhat later in the season with 2 treatments of Plantosverde (about 10 days apart), after which I could see the first results about 10 days after the first spray. The olives recovered nicely and I could see that after the 2 sprays they coped better with the lack of water. In the 2016/2017 season I used Plantosverde on the olives as well as the wine grapes after being granted permission by Ecocert to use the product as we are an organic farm. In the beginning of 2017, I took leaf samples for analysis during thrashing and to my surprise there were no Ca deficiencies in the vines or olives. For the 2017/2018 season I planned to give the vineyard as well as the olives only 3 applications (which includes a post-harvest application) of Plantosverde to keep the input costs as low as possible during the drought. I decided to give only the one section we use for table olives 2 extra sprays.

The results were as follows. The vineyard's harvest was indeed down, but the quality of the grapes was very good and for me the most important thing was the fact that the vineyard handled the drought so well without really showing that it was suffering. The shoot lengths and cluster size were in most cases very short and smaller than in a normal season, but the colour of the leaves was a nice green and looked very healthy. It must be kept in mind that for the 2017/2018 season we only had a third of the water available for the olives and vineyard compared to years when our ponds are full at the beginning of a season on Waverley Hills. We started the season with one dam empty and the other dam not even half full. Our boreholes had to help, but could not solve the problem. What is most impressive to me of all is the fact that I initially planned to apply a post-harvest spray to all the vineyard blocks, but when I got the results of the leaf analyzes taken during the 2018 thrashing stage I sang a different tune. There was not a single block that had a Ca deficiency. I decided to only spray the one block (about 2.6 ha) where the Ca levels were somewhat lower than the rest, as well as the new

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plantings to just ease the "stress" of the drought somewhat. As for the olives, we decided at the beginning of the 2017/2018 season that there would be no water available for the olives until most of the grapes were off, but I did however start giving a little water here and there in December just to bring some life to the trees, but it wasn't nearly enough. I pruned a portion of the olives trees late in the season (at the size of a pea) just to get rid of unnecessary branches. I could see that it helped quite a bit. However, what surprised me was the fact that usually under these conditions we get a lot of wrinkling of olives, but in this case, it was much less.

Plantosverde is not a miracle product that will fix everything overnight, but rather a maintenance product that will have many benefits in the long term, such as eg: A healthier plant that will be better able to handle "stress" due to drought and insect damage. The plant will also be less susceptible to diseases and problem insects over the long term. **It is also very important to introduce a post-harvest spray into the program just to "calm down" the plant and replenish the calcium that was used by the plant during the season.** In our case, however, it is somewhat difficult to just spray a product for personal reasons or preferences. It is required by the organic certification bodies that you must be able to prove that there is a shortage or low levels of eg: Ca was therefore the application made.

However, I hope that whoever reads this letter will feel more confident to test the product.

Sincerely,

Johan Greeff (Plaasbestuurder, Waverley Hills)



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