

## Hail damage in the Douro

20 Jun 2006 by JR

*Paul Symington of the eponymous port producing family sends this report.*

The Douro was hit by a very heavy storm on the night of the 14 jun. In some areas the storm was accompanied by sizeable hail stones that caused considerable damage to the vines.

The hail damage hit the Pinhão valley and the Rio Torto valleys particularly badly.

Properties further east such as Quinta dos Malvedos and Quinta do Vesuvio were totally unaffected, getting just heavy rain which has only benefited the vines.

In some of the higher areas around S João da Pesqueira and Ervedosa the losses are quite high with some farmers reporting a total loss of this year's crop and calling for government intervention and financial help.

At Warre's Quinta da Cavadinha and the adjoining vineyards of Alvito and Netas in the Pinhão valley, the hail is estimated to have damaged some 20 per cent of the young green bunches on the vines.

Ironically, in the parts of the Cavadinha vineyard where the excess leaf and shoot growth had yet to be cut back, the additional protection proved to have saved many bunches.

The degree of damage done has been widely reported in the Portuguese national press with some newspapers reporting a very high percentage of this year's crop being destroyed in some key areas. It is likely and to be hoped that the actual damage is not as widespread as initially reported, although some have undoubtedly been hit hard.

The consequence of this storm will only have a slight impact in the short term on the port trade at large and due to the (normally financially burdensome) law that requires port companies to maintain a 3-1 stock ratio, there will be no major shortfall in production of first rate wines as a result. Our deepest concern is for those Douro farmers who have lost all or part of their crop on which they depend for their annual income and we sincerely hope they receive the support and compensation they merit.