KWV implicated in flavourant scandal

6 Dec 2004 by JR

KWV, the once omnipotent South African wine export body has just issued the following statement:

Two winemakers employed by KWV were dismissed after it was established that they were guilty of manipulating two lots of the company's 2004 Sauvignon Blanc wines. This follows a comprehensive investigation by the Wine and Spirits Board (WSB) about the use of illegal flavourants in the winemaking process.

KWV co-operated fully with the WSB during the course of the investigation. KWV had distanced itself from the very beginning, together with the industry, from any illegal practices and acted immediately when it was informed of the finding. An urgent and in-depth investigation was launched.

In addition to the tests undertaken by the WSB, KWV undertook independent analyses of all its 2004 Sauvignon Blanc wines. The samples for the independent testing were drawn under the audit supervision of PriceWaterhouseCoopers. These tests confirmed that two of the wines showed deviations. The WSB was kept informed throughout the process of these actions and results.

The two designated lots of wine were immediately isolated. The one tank was destined for a later release of the 2004 Laborie Sauvignon Blanc and the other lot was destined for the 2004 KWV Reserve Sauvignon Blanc. Both wines will be destroyed under supervision by the WSB. Neither of these lots has reached the market.

Dr Willem Barnard, CEO of KWV Limited, has emphasised that the two wine makers acted on their own initiative – without authorization, permission or a mandate – and that KWV was not aware of the manipulation at any stage. "KWV's value system and practices are aimed at the ethical and legal production of wine. It is a traumatic incident for us but we believe that it will serve as a serious warning and an example also for other wine makers."

KWV employed seven wine makers. After the dismissal of Ian Nieuwoudt and Gideon Theron, KWV's entire staff complement recommitted itself to the company's ethical code and quality assurance.

The winemaking team led by Sterik de Wet will continue KWV's high standards of wine production and supply, with an increased focus on quality control measures.

Dr Barnard is unequivocal that KWV regards this occurrence in a very serious light. "KWV is one of the foremost producers in the wine industry and realises its responsibility towards the industry. We believe, however, that our quick and decisive actions, together with our proven record of quality and achievements over many years, will result in continued support from both the industry and the market place."

Enquiries

Dr Willem Barnard
CEO: KWV Limited
Tel: +27-21-807 3232
Cellphone: +27-(0)83 269 0564
Fax: +27-21-863 1061
E-mail: barnardw@kwv.co.za