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**Grape Compass**

Enabling quality grapes

*Powered by HydroNET*

## **User Experience: Protea Heights Farm**

## Introduction

Grape Compass is a smartphone application that can be used as a decision support system for viticulturists/grape growers that makes reliable forecasts of fungal disease risks in vineyards. Not only does Grape Compass help avoid unnecessary sprays during periods of low risk, but the app also helps to ensure optimal crop protection during periods of high disease risk.



Protea Heights Farm is a Grape Compass user and the farm's manager, Francois Viljoen, provided some valuable insights on their experience in using the application in the 2021 and 2022 seasons.

## About Protea Heights Farm

Protea Heights is a protea and vineyard farm situated in the Devon Valley area of Stellenbosch. The farm was the first protea farm in South Africa and it was bought by Ginny Povall in 2008.

Francois started working on the farm in 2008. "We have decided to pull out some of the oldest protea blocks and replace them with vines. Today we farm with 5.5 Ha of vines and 8 Ha of proteas."

They are making their own wine under Botanica Wines. "We have tried to be organic on the vines since 2014, but it has been a battle since day one due to the disease pressure being too high in the Devon Valley area."

## How did you get started with Grape Compass?

Protea Heights trialed Grape Compass in the 2021/2022 season and then signed up to use it in the 2022/2023 season.

Francois explained that downy mildew pressure was high in both 2021 and 2022. "Since 2020 we have struggled to keep downy mildew under control with the organic spray program."

Francois says they decided to switch back to conventional farming, but still try and farm with nature. "We then also decided to make use of Grape Compass."

In 2023, powdery mildew pressure has also been high in the Devon Valley area.

## How was your experience with Grape Compass?

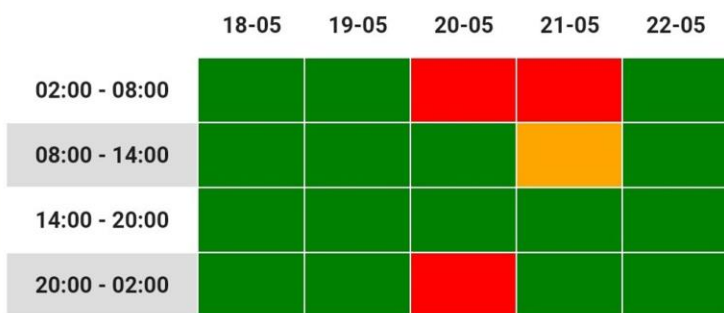
After trialing Grape Compass in the 2021/2022 season, Francois gave the following feedback: "I think for us, Grape Compass is still new and it's still a learning curve. However, it helped to have an additional tool to check when the disease pressure will be high and in making the decision on when to spray."

After using the app again in the 2022/2023 season, Francois gave the following feedback: "I would say the app is accurate enough and helps in making the decision on when to spray."

## What would you say is the biggest benefit of Grape Compass?

"I think the biggest benefit was to see a few days in advance what the disease pressure will be and make additional changes to your spray program." Francois also says Grape Compass is beneficial for determining the timing of their sprays.

### Downy mildew - Primary infection risk



### Botrytis - Infection risk



For more information please contact:

Email: [info@grapecompass.com](mailto:info@grapecompass.com)

Phone: +31 6 42 14 45 01

Or visit our website: [www.grapecompass.com](http://www.grapecompass.com)