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MEDIA RELEASE

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New program for the Ontario wine industry aims to increase red wine sales

With foreign imports profiting most from Ontario's rising red wine sales, Brock University's grape and wine research centre is launching a new program to help domestic wineries capture a bigger piece of the action.

TanninAlert will track tannin levels – which impact bitterness and astringency in wine – and provide Ontario grape growers and winemakers with information on the ripeness of these flavours to help consistently create rich and robust Ontario red wines. Brock's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) has partnered with Ontario Grape and Wine Research Inc. (OGWRI) to create the program.

Red wine sales in the province totaled \$695 million last year and Ontario wines accounted for 22 per cent of that. TanninAlert's target is to grow that market share by more than 20 per cent over the next decade, creating 800 jobs in the process.

“We are extremely excited to add TanninAlert to CCOVI's lineup of outreach programs,” said CCOVI director Debbie Inglis. “Our flagship program VineAlert has proved that providing the industry with Ontario-specific data can yield substantial economic returns.”

The research team is currently building a tannin database to understand the levels in Ontario grapes and the differences that occur between varieties and vintages. Based on this data, winemaking trials will take place to develop winemaking production techniques based on tannin level and grape composition to optimize wine quality.

When the service rolls out to grape growers and winemakers, they will be able to receive tannin analysis on samples from their operation and receive recommendations for red winemaking techniques based on if tannin levels are low, medium or high.

CCOVI oenologist Belinda Kemp says although the program is starting in Ontario, the goal is to expand TanninAlert across Canada.

OGWRI chair Matthias Oppenlaender said partnering with CCOVI to develop TanninAlert was a natural fit.

“OGWRI and CCOVI have a long history of collaboration in order to enhance the profitability and sustainability of the Ontario grape and wine industry,” said Oppenlaender.

“We look forward to turning this innovative idea into a reality. This new service will provide Ontario winemakers with an ideal opportunity to get the optimum quality from an Ontario grown grape.”

The program received \$150,000 from the Ontario Centres of Excellence VIP II program with \$204,724 in cash and in-kind funding from OGWRI.

TanninAlert is also part of a larger research program looking to improve grapevine health, wine quality and market competitiveness that has received \$1.42 million in industry and government support. For more details on this program visit <https://brocku.ca/brock-news/2016/04/million-dollar-research-program-invests-in-grape-and-wine-industrys-future>.

For more information or for assistance arranging interviews:

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