

Cornish winemakers could benefit from climate change study

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Sam Lindo, Wine Maker at Camel Valley Vineyard (left) and Dr Jonathan Mosedale (right). Image: Toby Weller.

Two of Cornwall's existing wine producers, Camel Valley Vineyard of Bodmin and Polgoon Vineyard and Orchard of Penzance, have offered researchers from the University of Exeter's Penryn-based Environment and Sustainability Institute (ESI) access to their vineyards for the study. The researchers are now inviting other local vineyards to come forward and collaborate on the research.

Internationally recognised viticultural scientist and expert Dr Richard Smart of Newlyn will be involved in the research, having recently completed a similar study in Tasmania, Australia.

Previous research has seen the ESI team analysing daily weather data to

develop detailed projections of microclimates across Cornwall and assessing the likely impacts on wildlife. This is now extending to agriculture, and specifically to vineyards, which are recognised as being particularly climatically sensitive.

The study will reveal how Cornwall's present climate patterns vary with location, and how they might change in future. Viticultural scientist and expert Dr Richard Smart said: "In cooler climates like the UK, the most important decision to be made about a vineyard is where to plant it, as the climate there will determine future performance, and profitability. Vineyard site selection is king."

This study will reveal what [climate change](#) could mean for vineyards and how they could tailor their practices in response to new weather conditions. This could mean, for example, using different pruning systems or growing crops to the optimum height for local temperatures.

Dr Ilya Maclean of the University of Exeter's Environment and Sustainability Institute said: "While many assume warmer weather will benefit vineyards, climate change goes hand in hand with more unpredictability. Wine makers have the challenge of cultivating a crop that is highly sensitive to changes in weather – frost at the wrong time can kill a crop and can be devastating to a business.

"I am really interested in finding practical solutions to problems and this has the potential for us to deliver real benefits to a relatively new but fast-growing industry in Cornwall."

ESI researcher Dr Jonathan Mosedale added: "Vineyards are a major long-term investment and would benefit from a better understanding of the risks and opportunities that climate change presents. It is essential for us as researchers to understand the challenges that winemakers face here in Cornwall and the skills and resources that would allow [vineyards](#) to

prosper under future climate conditions."

Sam Lindo, Wine Maker at Camel Valley Vineyard said: "Here at Camel Valley we have seen things warming up since we started in 1989 and winemaking would simply not have been possible in Cornwall in the 50s and 60s. But it is more complicated than that, for example, warmer weather may bring heavier rain which can be a real problem when the vines are flowering.

"There are many myths and assumptions in our industry but every site is different, and what works in the South of France may not work here in Cornwall. The changeable [weather](#) means our yields fluctuate considerably year on year. This research could give us important data to inform our practices and help us deliver more reliable yields."

Provided by University of Exeter

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