The Western Cape Government, together with Wines of South Africa, recently hosted the second Beijing Wine Tasting in China. This year saw 16 wine companies exhibiting more than 250 South African wines. The event was attended by Chinese wine importers, the Chinese wine press, and local wine enthusiasts. Gerrit van Rensburg, Western Cape Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, opened the event, inviting the Chinese audience to experience the Western Cape through wine tourism.

Minister van Rensburg and Michaela Stander, Market Manager: Europe and Asia, Wines of South Africa, fielded questions from the Chinese press at a press briefing.

Minister van Rensburg told journalists South Africa produces the best quality wine in the world at any given price point. He said South Africa is unique amongst wine producing countries due to our ability to guarantee the origin of each bottle of wine back to the vineyard where the grapes were harvested. “This is a very strong guarantee of quality and food safety, unmatched by the rest of the wine producing world.”

Michaela Stander stressed the diverse wine offering from the Western Cape: “We have some of the oldest viticultural soils in the world. Our winelands are encircled by two oceans and we have diversity of soil and climate, giving our winemakers endless wine-making possibilities. We are able to produce a variety of wine styles all representing incredible value at each price point. Stylistically we produce varietal, fruit forward wines with the elegance and finesse that makes it easy to pair with food. In terms of matching with Chinese food, we have found that especially our Chenin Blanc and Pinotage complement some of the dishes.”

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE SA WINE INDUSTRY

- South Africa produces roughly 800 million litres of wine per year, of which approximately 50% is exported. In terms of global production SA is the 8th largest producer with approximately 102,000 hectares under vineyard. South Africa represents 3% of global wine trade in terms of volume and 6% in terms of value.

- Our largest export markets are the UK, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands with the USA and China becoming increasingly important. China currently represents approximately 3% of our total exports. SA currently has less than 3% market share in China, which represents an excellent opportunity for future export growth.

- South African wine exports to China have experienced good growth in both bulk and packaged product, growing approximately 32% over the past 4 years (2009 – 2012). Since 2011 China entered our list of our top ten export destinations for packaged wine exports. Figures for the first five months of 2013 already show a 53% increase for total exports, compared to the same period last year. What is especially important is that the growth has been predominantly in packaged exports, which showed a 40% increase over the same period.