



## PRESS RELEASE

**CHAMPAGNE 2011: AN ATYPICAL HARVEST**

This year's Champagne harvest that has just come to an end was as atypical as the beginning of the viticultural year.

A harsh winter, a summer-like springtime and an autumnal summer meant that the vines lost some of the three weeks advance recorded in early July. However, the picking started early - August 19<sup>th</sup> in a few villages, with most crus starting on August 24<sup>th</sup> - making this the second earliest harvest in the history of Champagne after 1822.

Pickers experienced stifling heat, around 35°C, very cool mornings, hot sun and thunderstorms, sometimes even hail. This unpredictable weather led to a slowdown in the maturation of grapes, particularly chardonnay, and some Champagne producers had to temporarily suspend the picking.

Champenois are of the opinion that the quality of the grapes is good, with outstanding chardonnay. The grapes, marked by a good balance of sugar and acidity, offer the potential for promising cuvées though the final assessment will only be made when still wines are tasted in early spring 2012.

All winemakers should have reached the minimum yield of 10,500 kilos per hectare, which will ensure that growing Champagne demand is met.

Despite challenging global economic conditions, the commercial recovery achieved in 2010 continues: during the first half of 2011, worldwide Champagne shipments were up by 5.2% with the prospect of 330 - 335 million bottles being shipped by the end of the year.

**- Ends -**

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