



*Press release*

## **A START DATE FOR THE CHAMPAGNE HARVEST**

**The 2021 Champagne harvest started on 6 September. Weather conditions are good for the ripening of the grapes, but conditions across the vineyard are unusually varied. Because Champagne always picks its grapes by hand, this means that the organisation of picking this year will have to be adjusted.**

Weather conditions in 2021 have been challenging, with a twelve-day period of frost at the beginning of the year, hail on several occasions, then persistent rain in spring which encouraged mildew in the vines. These various hazards have caused big differences in the yield and maturity of the grapes, from parcel to parcel and/or variety to variety.

Overall, Champagne expects to lose close to 30% of the yield on account of frost, to which must be added between 25% and 30% lost to mildew. Hail damaged 500 hectares, with half that area losing the whole crop.

Co-Président of the Comité Champagne Maxime Toubart said: *"Variations in ripening across the vineyard call for an approach to harvesting that is adapted to suit each part of the vineyard. We are ready to help all players conduct their harvests in the best conditions and so guarantee grapes of the best quality."* As every year, Champagne's Réseau Matu\* guides the choice of optimal dates for the start of picking, by commune and grape variety. Individual start dates this year will be spread between 6 and 27 September.

The Comité Champagne stresses that this year's exceptional weather conditions may impact the quantity of grapes, but not the quality. *"The people of Champagne are accustomed to work in difficult conditions"*, notes Co-Président of the Comité Champagne Jean-Marie Barillère. *"They take pride in dealing with each year's conditions to produce the great wine that is Champagne."*

As last year, the Champagne sector will apply stringent health precautions at harvest time so as to guarantee the safety of the harvest workers.

Epernay, 8th Septembre 2021

\* The Réseau Matu is a network of hundreds of representative vineyard plots spread across the vineyard. Data from these plots allows the Comité Champagne, with the assistance of volunteer professionals, to follow and analyse the progress of grape ripening in real time, and so optimise the choice of harvest dates. This year for the first time, a mobile phone app has been used to collect the data.