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Tourism is wine industry's hope

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The South African wine industry cannot survive on production alone and has to realise that wine tourism is an integral part of any sustainable wine industry, according to Johan van Rooyen, the chief executive of the SA Wine Industry Council.

Speaking at the opening of the new L'Avenir wine tasting venue outside Stellenbosch last week, Van Rooyen said the wine industry contributed R22 billion to the South African gross domestic product.

"The macroeconomic study into this figure showed that 25 percent of this R22 billion is directly related to wine tourism and the indications are there that this is set to grow," Van Rooyen said.

"With worldwide production levels outstripping the amount of consumers, South Africa must tap into its unique wine tourism offerings. By maximising this opportunity, wine tourism can give the industry stability in times of uncertainty."

The faith shown by foreign investors in the South African wine industry, such as the French Laroche Group, which had added L'Avenir to its

extensive wine interests in France and Chile, showed that certain foreign wine pundits had more faith in the local industry than many South Africans, Van Rooyen said.

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on the 'crisis' in the wine industry," he added.

"This crisis was apparently causing more wine farms to be on the market than wine brands available, and led to a somewhat gloomy picture of the industry. I am not going to comment on this so-called crisis as my day job has me talking enough economics and wine business."

Investments such as Laroche's incorporation of L'Avenir showed that South Africa had a truly world-class wine industry and need not stand back for anyone.