



Press Release

VineScout — Vineyard Robot Field Trials in Douro Vineyards

The Douro is known for its historic farming methods, but while traditional viticulture remains highly relevant, the region is having to adapt to a serious labour shortage resulting from substantial depopulation, with many people moving to the cities or abroad.

With a view to improving Douro viticulture as well as that of other European wine regions, a project for a vine monitoring robot termed VineScout was begun in December 2016 by a consortium of two leading Spanish Universities; Valencia and La Rioja, together with Wall-YE Robots & Software of France, Sundance Multiprocessor Technologies of the UK and Symington Family Estates.

VineScout is funded by the European Union H2020 'Fast Track to Innovation Pilot' with the objective of developing an affordable and reliable vineyard robot. European Union funding accounts for €1.7 million of the total €2 million investment.

VineScout was field-trialled at the Symington's Quinta do Ataíde Grape Variety Project in the week of 28th August. The tests were successful and the consortium will now advance to the next stage of development. An 'Agronomy Day' was held at Ataíde during which many other Douro wine producers, as well as universities, tech start-ups and research institutes saw VineScout in operation and could exchange views and ideas.

Professor Francisco Rovira-Más of the Universitat Politècnica de València, the project coordinator and an expert in robotics and agricultural engineering, as well as Fernando Alves, the Symington Viticulture R&D manager, were delighted with the participation at the seminars and with the field trials. The input given by visitors made a valuable contribution to the project.

Symington have been at the forefront of the drive for higher quality Douro vineyards and to meet the serious challenges arising from the growing labour shortage. Experimental vineyards were planted at Quinta da Cavadinha in the Pinhão Valley in the 1990s, and in 2014 a 2.25 ha vineyard was planted at Quinta do Ataíde with 53 different grape varieties, many of them virtually unknown, together with a smaller replica at Quinta do Bomfim.

For more details visit www.vinescout.eu

Quinta do Ataíde, 4th September 2017

About Symington Family Estates

The Symingtons have been Port producers for five generations since 1882 but their involvement in Port dates back fourteen generations to 1652 through their great-grandmother Beatrice Leitão de Carvalhosa Atkinson. The family company is a leading quality Port producer with companies such as Graham's, Cockburn's, Dow's and Warre's, as well as being the leading vineyard owner in the Douro Valley with 1 024 hectares (2 530 acres) of vines at 26 quintas (vineyards). Many of the region's finest quintas belong to the family. For more information on Symington Family Estates, visit www.symington.com and discover more on blog.symington.com and www.facebook.com/grahams.port.wine