

Letras J., Winemaker & Viticulture Manager<sup>1</sup>; Coutinho J., Project Manager<sup>2</sup>; Moreira D., CEO<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Agromariensecoop, joao.letras@agromariensecoop.com; <sup>2</sup>Sustain Azores, joanacoutinho@sustainazores.com; <sup>3</sup>Agromariensecoop, direcao@agromariensecoop.com

## Introduction

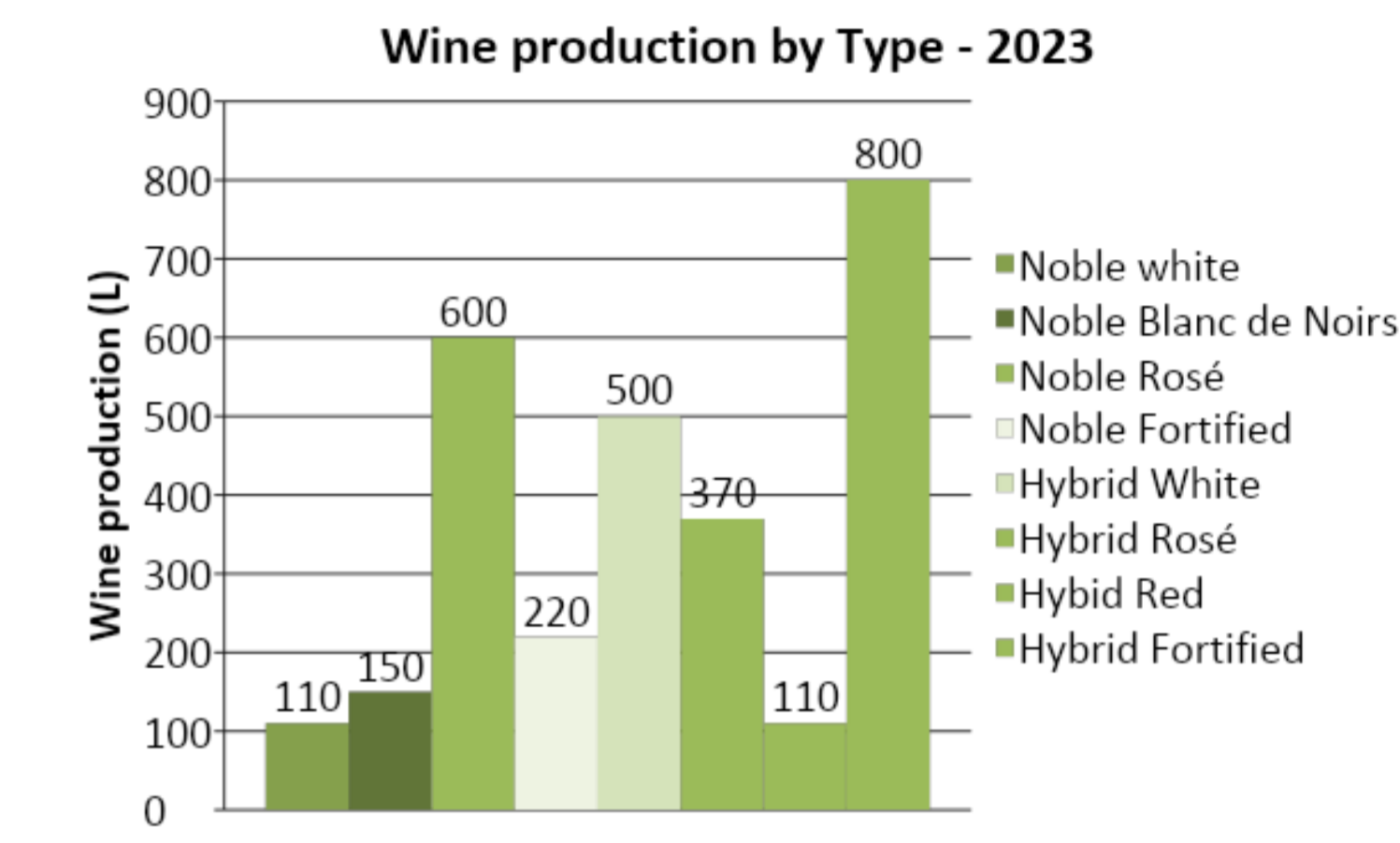
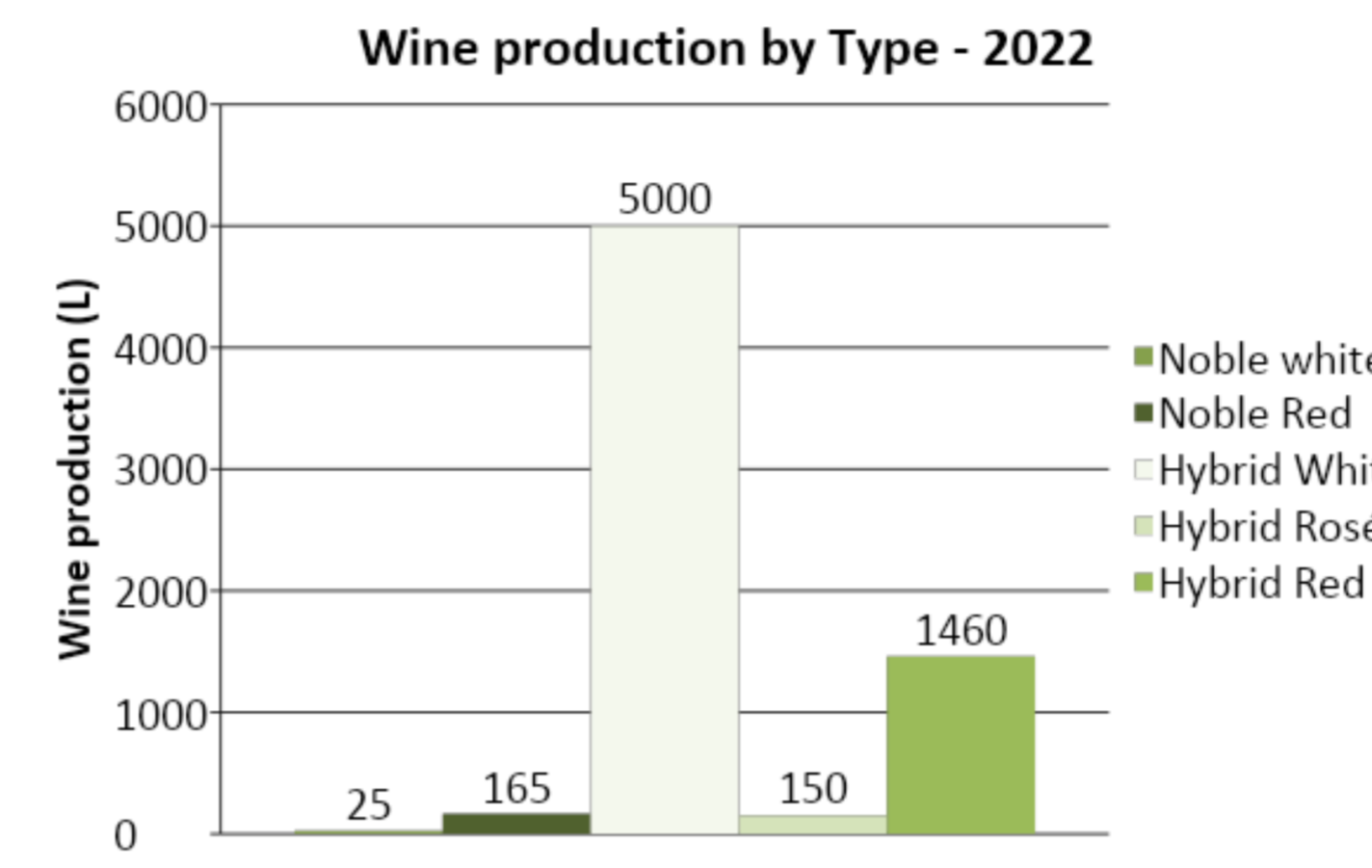
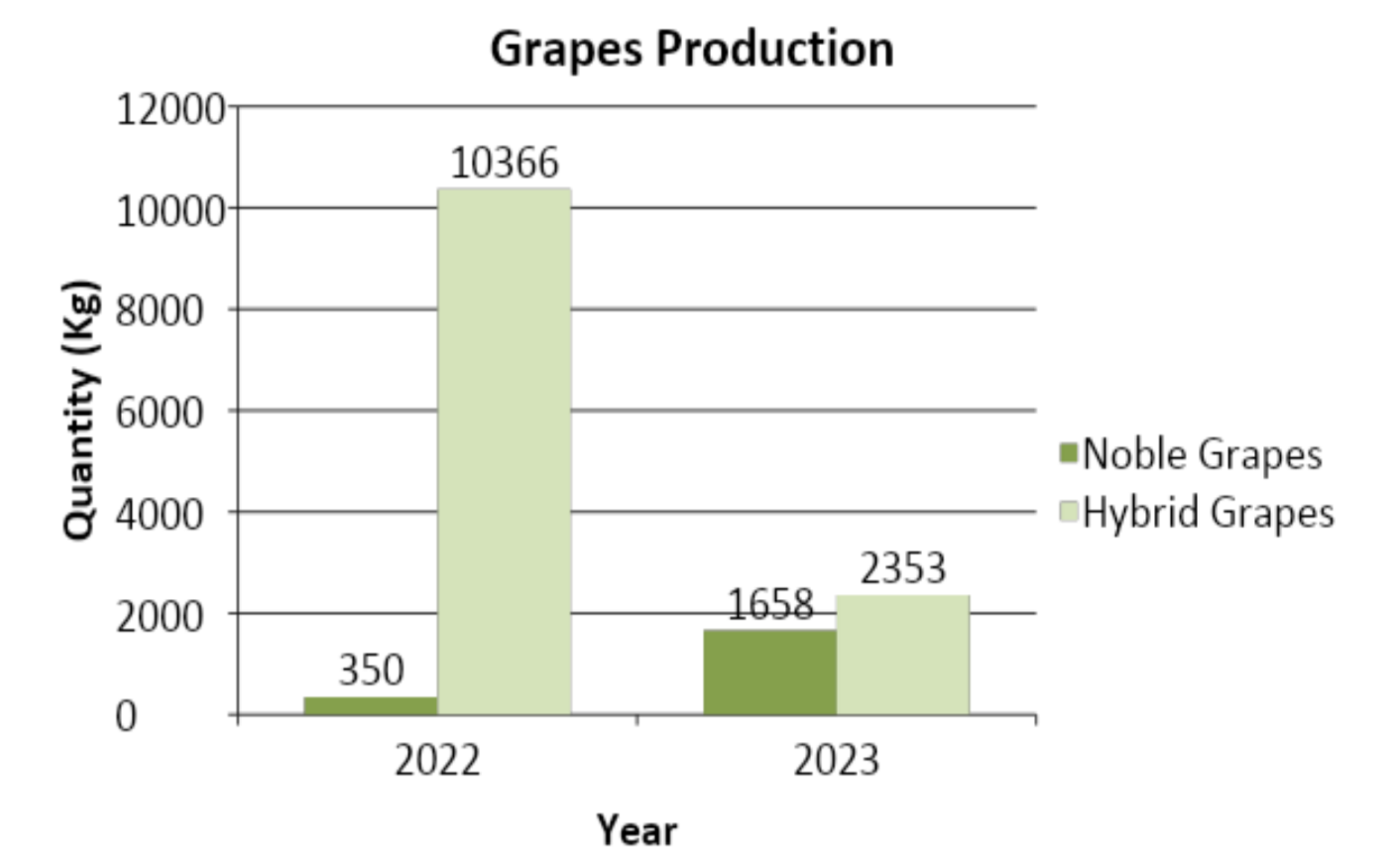
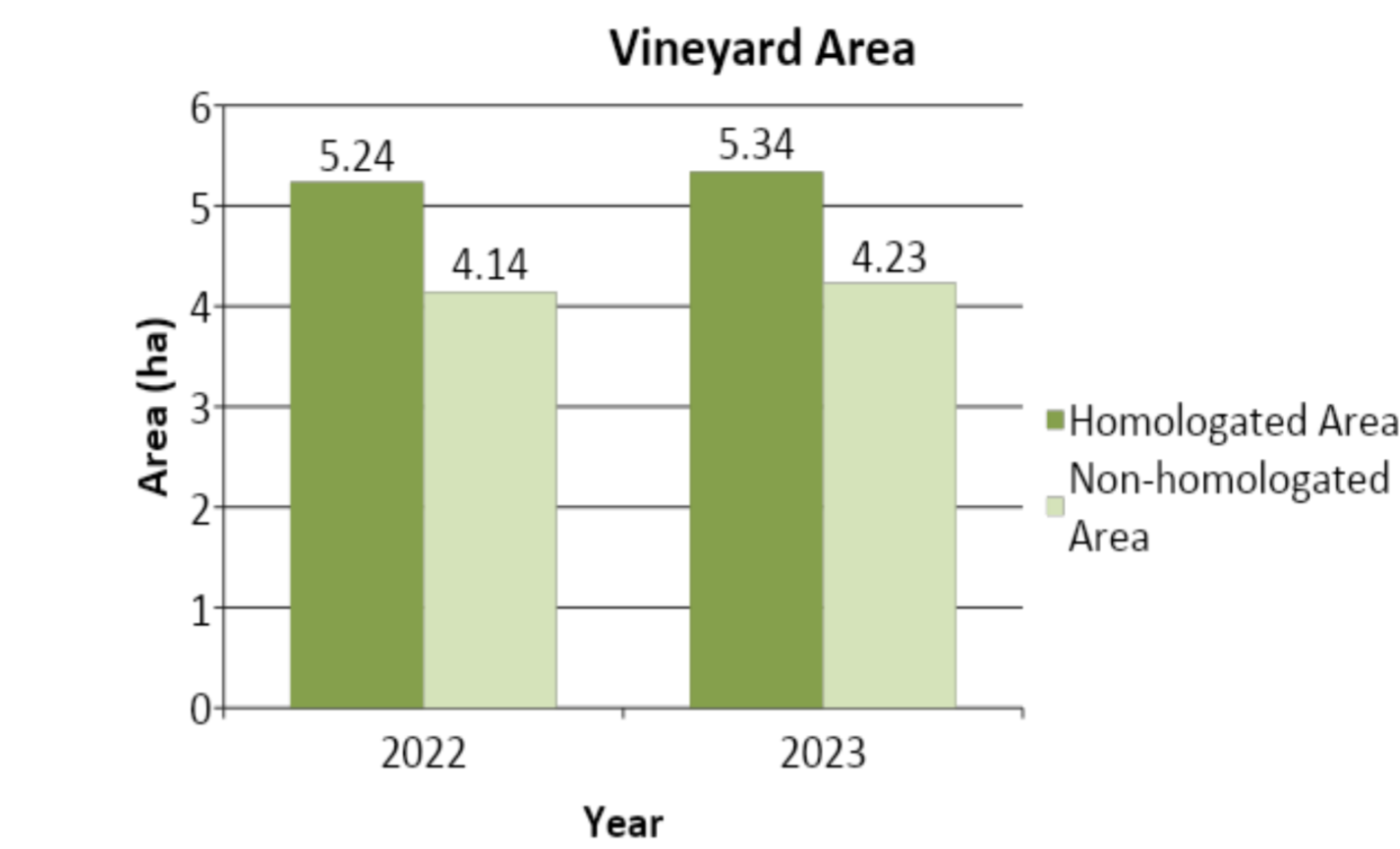
Santa Maria Island, in the Azores, has a long viticultural tradition. However, after the arrival of powdery mildew and phylloxera in the mid-19th century, local vineyards were progressively replanted with hybrid and American grape varieties that were more resistant to disease and better adapted to local conditions. As a result, wine production became largely dependent on low-quality hybrid varieties.

Limited technical knowledge, lack of certified production systems and insufficient winemaking infrastructure have constrained the development of a competitive wine sector. At the same time, recent vineyard recovery programs and the expansion of noble grape varieties created an opportunity to improve wine quality and promote certified production.

The Santa Maria Wine Lab project was developed to evaluate the viticultural and oenological potential of Santa Maria Island and to support the production of wines eligible for Azores Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) certification. The project also aimed to contribute to the professionalization of the wine sector and to the valorization of the island's cultural vineyard landscape.



## Results and discussion



Wine	TAVA (%vol.)	pH	AT (g/L)	Certification status (Azores PGI)
Blanc de Noir	11.45	3.44	8.18	Approved
Verdelho	11.57	3.65	7.86	Approved
Rosé	11.51	3.32	9.03	Approved

Total wine production (2022-2023)



## Objectives

The main objective of the project was to produce wines from Santa Maria Island with sufficient quality to obtain Azores Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) certification.

Specific objectives included:

- Improving grape quality for winemaking;
- Increasing the production of noble grape varieties;
- Training local producers in vineyard management;
- Producing approximately 5,000 L of wine per production cycle;
- Produce wines eligible for Azores PGI certification
- Evaluating the physicochemical and sensory quality of the wines.

## Methodology

The experimental micro-vinification winery was installed at Agromariensecoop facilities. Grapes from both noble and hybrid varieties were collected from local producers and processed according to predefined oenological protocols.

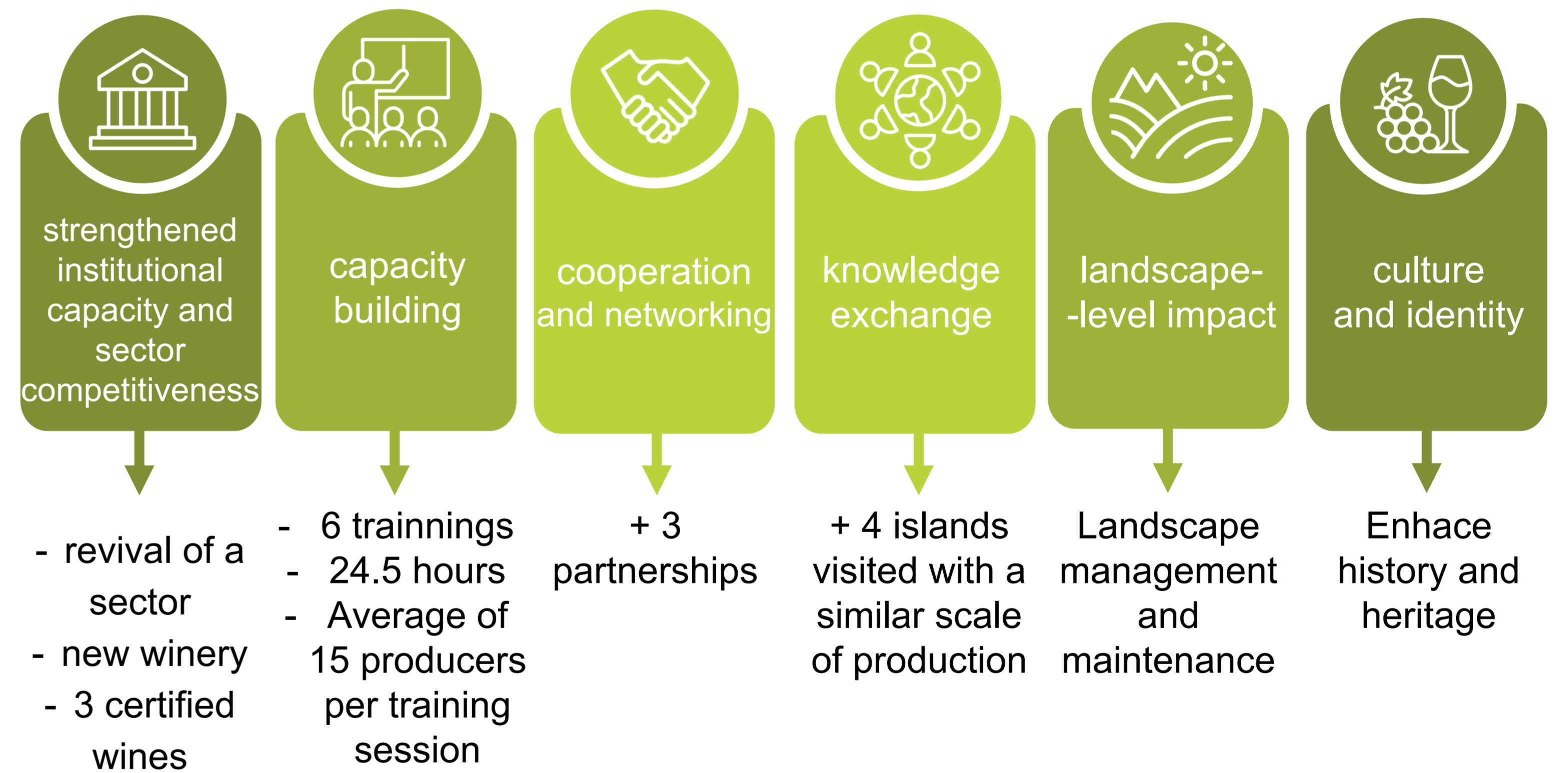
The project included:

- Vineyard monitoring during grape maturation;
- Technical support for local winegrowers;
- Producer training sessions on pruning, diseases, grape maturation and oenology;
- Study visits to other Azorean wine-producing islands;
- Experimental vinification processes;
- Physicochemical and sensory analyses of the produced wines.

Wine quality was evaluated according to the certification requirements of the Regional Wine Commission of the Azores.



The project resulted in a transition from non-commercial hybrid grape production towards high-value noble grape varieties, able to achieve certified wines. Key results include:



Despite adverse climatic conditions in 2023, including heavy rainfall, disease pressure and the young age of many vineyards, the project successfully produced certified wines and demonstrated the feasibility of quality wine production on Santa Maria Island.

## Conclusion

The Santa Maria Wine Lab project demonstrated that Santa Maria Island has the potential to produce high quality wines when supported by appropriate infrastructure, technical expertise, producer training and engagement through knowledge exchange.

The project contributed to the professionalization of the local wine sector, increased the relevance of noble grape varieties (including traditional Azorean varieties) and reinforced the cultural and economic value of viticulture on the island. The certification of three wines confirmed the effectiveness of the adopted methodology and supports future investment in wine production on the island and its steep-slope environments.

## References

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