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Eight startups join Wine Tech Challenge

They will test vineyard, cellar and sales technologies with Italian wine companies in field trials

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Eight startups focused on vineyard, cellar and market technology have been selected for the Wine Tech Challenge, an open innovation program launched by Eatable Adventures with support from UniCredit at the Verona Agrifood Innovation Hub.

The initiative brought together some of Italy’s best-known wine companies, including Mack & Schühle Italia, Paladin Giovanni Cantine, Pasqua Vini and VasonGroup, which worked with the accelerator to identify practical problems in the sector and test new tools that could be used in production, sales and distribution. The challenge drew 80 international applications before narrowing the field to projects judged to have strong technical maturity and a clear path to industrial testing.

Among the Italian startups chosen was Asteasier - AlgaVitis, a University of Verona spin-off that turns carbon dioxide and winery wastewater into microalgal biomass through photobioreactors. Prefe developed an “instant intelligence” system that tracks more than 8,000 retail outlets each day to help wineries manage distribution and pricing in large grocery chains. Direct From Italy built a SaaS platform that automates customs compliance and excise calculations in 46 countries, making direct sales to foreign markets easier.

Other selected Italian projects included Weed Laser Cleaner - Wlc, which uses precision laser systems mounted on tractors to control weeds without chemical herbicides; BeadRoots, a biodegradable natural hydrogel made from algae that helps soil retain water and can reduce irrigation needs by up to 85%; and Plant Voice, which places IoT biosensors inside grapevine trunks to analyze sap in real time and detect water stress or disease before symptoms appear on the outside.

Two startups came from outside Italy. Dolia, based in Luxembourg, uses artificial intelligence to centralize sales processes, automate complex orders and monitor stock in real time. Altr, from the United States, developed a patented nano-membrane dealcoholization technology that works at room temperature and is designed to produce low- and no-alcohol wines without changing their aroma profile.

The selection process was led by Eatable Adventures’ team with direct input from the four wine partners. Alberto Barbari, regional vice president for Italy at Eatable Adventures, said the program is meant to turn promising ideas into concrete industrial projects by matching startup technologies with specific business needs identified by partner companies.

The startups will now begin field trials with the industrial partners to test their technologies in real conditions and assess whether they can be integrated into the wine supply chain as operational tools.