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Late Frost Damages Ribera del Duero Vineyards

The cold snap hit Castilla y León after days of unusual warmth, leaving growers facing losses across more than 5,300 hectares.

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Late frosts damaged more than 5,300 hectares of wine grapes in Castilla y León in three days, with the Ribera del Duero region accounting for more than 3,300 hectares of the losses, according to data from Agroseguro cited by Diario de Valladolid.

The cold snap hit in the early hours of May 16, when temperatures fell below freezing across parts of the region and caught growers off guard because frost damage usually comes in April. This year, it came after several days of unusually warm weather in Castilla y León, where daytime highs had topped 30 degrees.

Valladolid was the hardest-hit province, with 1,695 hectares affected, nearly half of the total recorded in the insurance claims. Burgos followed with 1,154 hectares, then Soria with 194 hectares and Segovia with 185 hectares. The damaged area stretches across much of the Ribera del Duero corridor, from Pesquera and Peñafiel to San Esteban de Gormaz, though the losses were not uniform and some vineyards were spared while neighboring plots were hit hard.

Agroseguro said the frost is now the main weather risk affecting wine grapes in Castilla y León this season. The company has opened claims covering about 8,000 hectares so far this campaign. Along with the frost damage, hail has affected another 2,400 hectares. In April, there were also significant frosts on April 12 and 13 that damaged 1,636 insured hectares.

The sector estimates that between 20% and 30% of production may be affected in some areas, though officials say it is still too early to know the full extent. José Ignacio García Barasoain, Agroseguro’s regional director in Castilla y León, said technicians have only assessed about 400 hectares so far and are giving priority to the most heavily affected zones so growers can clear damaged vines and continue field work.

He said some parcels have lost as much as 90% of their crop, while others have suffered only minor damage. That makes it difficult to calculate an average loss at this stage. He also noted that frost in Ribera del Duero is not unusual, but frost this late in May is rare.

Last year, weather-related damage to vineyards in Castilla y León led to about €10 million in payouts from Agroseguro. The previous year, indemnities reached €30 million. Those losses came mainly from hail, rain and wind storms, with frost accounting for a smaller share.

The rise in insured vineyard acreage has been one bright spot for the sector. Castilla y León set a record for wine-grape insurance in the latest autumn contracting period for the 2026 crop year, with 28,392 hectares insured, up 5.1% from the previous year. The region also insured 183,265 tons of grapes and €128 million in capital value, both higher than a year earlier.

Nearly 95% of policies now include frost coverage, reflecting how growers have adapted to repeated weather shocks. Agroseguro said farmers are increasingly treating insurance as a fixed cost of production rather than an optional expense, especially after seeing how one event can be followed by another. In some vineyards that escaped frost earlier this spring, hail later wiped out part of the crop.