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Hansen Warns Wine Sector Cannot Take Success for Granted

Hansen warned that shifting consumers and tougher markets are testing Europe’s wine dominance.

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The European wine sector is a shared global heritage and a central part of regional identity, especially in Italy, European Agriculture Commissioner Christophe Hansen said Wednesday in a video message opening the 79th National Congress of Assoenologi in Conegliano, Italy.

Hansen said the industry remains a worldwide success story, accounting for 60% of global consumption and production and protected by more than 1,700 geographical indications. But he warned that its leadership cannot be taken for granted as consumer expectations shift quickly and markets become more volatile and competitive.

That is why, he said, the European Union adopted the Wine Package in February 2026, a set of measures meant to give producers tools to invest in climate resilience, prepare for market swings and address overproduction. The package also aims to harmonize digital labeling, add flexibility to wine management and create new opportunities for dealcoholized wines.

Speaking to enologists, wine technicians and other industry professionals gathered in Conegliano through May 30, Hansen said the city and its surrounding area reflect what wine means to Italy and Europe: a living heritage shaped by countries, traditions and generations of work. He said wine is far more than an agricultural product.

The commissioner also pointed to climate change as a growing challenge for the sector, saying it is already affecting grape varieties and harvest cycles. He said innovation must be balanced with quality and strict winemaking practices, adding that enologists play an essential role in protecting authenticity while helping the industry move forward.

The congress is expected to focus on several issues facing the sector, including how to reconnect with younger consumers, the debate over wine and health, export markets in Italy and abroad, climate change, sustainability, training and scientific research. Topics under discussion include resistant grape varieties, lowering alcohol levels in wine and improving soil fertility.

Prosecco will be one of the main wines featured during the event, including bottles from the Prosecco Doc, Conegliano Valdobbiadene Superiore Docg and Asolo Superiore Docg designations. Conegliano also has historical significance for Assoenologi: The group was founded there in 1891 by Antonio Carpenè and Arturo Marescalchi, at a time when Carpenè had already helped establish the local wine school with Giovanni Battista Cerletti and founded Carpenè Malvolti, a winery long associated with Prosecco.