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European Wine Producers Push to Lock In New Industry Measures Before CAP Talks

Industry leaders say the recently approved wine package will matter only if Brussels makes its key provisions permanent in the next farm policy

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European wine producers are pressing to protect a new set of industry measures as the European Union moves toward negotiations on its next Common Agricultural Policy, arguing that the recently approved “wine package” will matter only if its main provisions become permanent.

That message emerged at a conference in Quistello, in northern Italy, where trade groups, consortium leaders and legal experts reviewed the first effects of Regulation (EU) 2026/471 and warned that the political fight is shifting from approval of the package itself to the broader farm policy talks now taking shape in Brussels.

Ignacio Sánchez Recarte, secretary general of CEEV, the European wine industry committee, said the package marked a political success for the European wine supply chain and reflected a more constructive period of dialogue with European institutions. But he also said the process is far from over. In remarks cited at the meeting, he said the sector must now work on delegated acts and defend what it has won in negotiations over the next CAP, because only the final shape of that policy will show whether the industry has secured lasting gains.

The debate comes at a difficult moment for Europe’s wine market, especially in Italy, where large inventories are weighing on prices and strategy ahead of the next harvest. Speakers at the Quistello event said Italian cellars were already full, with 49.1 million hectoliters in stock as of May 30, roughly more than an average harvest. With the 2026 vintage approaching, that overhang is sharpening arguments inside the sector over how to manage supply, vineyard potential and emergency tools.

The conference, titled “Wine Changes: Challenges and Opportunities. The Wine Package and Its First Applications,” was organized by Ugivi, the Italian union of vine and wine jurists, with Cantina Sociale di Quistello, the Mantua civil chamber and Legal Hackers Mantova. It brought together representatives from cooperatives, appellation groups and European origin-wine organizations at a time when producers are trying to adapt to weaker consumption, climate pressure and changing demand for lower-alcohol products.

According to speakers at the event, the wine package was built over about 18 months of negotiations following the first meeting of the High-Level Group on Wine Policy on Sept. 11, 2024. The final measures revise four pillars of EU wine regulation: the common market organization rules for wine, CAP strategic plans, geographical indications for wines and agricultural products, and aromatized wine-based products.

Those changes reach across much of the sector. Participants pointed to rules affecting production potential and supply management, promotion and internationalization, labeling, dealcoholized wines, wine tourism, climate adaptation and sustainability. Industry representatives said one reason the package advanced was a shift in tone from EU policymakers, who they described as more willing to listen to producers than in earlier rounds of reform.

Luca Rigotti, president of Confcooperative Vino and head of Copa-Cogeca's wine working group, said the next objective is to carry key measures from the wine package into the CAP so they become stable policy rather than temporary gains. He also argued that local territories should use the new framework to build long-term development plans tailored to their own vineyard economies instead of relying on one-size-fits-all crisis responses.

That point has become sensitive in Italy after some parts of the industry floated broad cuts to yields and blocks on authorizations as a response to oversupply. Several speakers in Quistello pushed back against generalized solutions. They argued that vineyard regions differ too much in economic structure, landscape value and dependence on viticulture for uniform national restrictions to work everywhere.

Rigotti said emergency tools such as distillation, green harvesting and vine grubbing-up can help if used carefully, but he warned they cannot solve the crisis in many areas where viticulture remains central to local economies and where alternatives are limited. He also renewed support for adding a "carry over" mechanism to future CAP rules so member states could retain unspent funds from one year and redirect them later for crisis management.

Riccardo Ricci Curbastro, president of EFOW, which represents European origin wines, also argued for locally calibrated measures rather than blanket interventions. He said each territory faces different pressures and should be able to respond with different strategies. He also called for rationalizing services among smaller consortia and encouraging mergers or closer coordination where needed so those bodies can handle growing responsibilities more effectively.

That issue is becoming more urgent because producer consortia are being asked to do more than oversee production rules and promotion. Speakers said they are increasingly expected to work on tourism services, sustainability standards and territorial planning while also helping smaller producers coordinate their efforts.

Carlo Alberto Panont, director of Consorzio Garda Doc and Valtenesi, said consortia need stronger skills, staffing and support structures if they are to meet those demands. He said new tasks linked to market change, updates to production rules and possible sustainability requirements are putting pressure on organizations that often have limited resources.

Sustainability was another major theme. Ricci Curbastro said certifications tied to environmental, social and governance standards could become an essential basis for collective protection of vineyard ecosystems and for rebuilding trust with consumers across age groups. In practice, that could mean more pressure on appellation bodies and producers to document environmental performance as part of their market positioning.

Wine tourism also drew attention as producers look for ways to offset weaker consumption through direct visitor spending. Mario Danesi, vice president of AsCoViLo, which represents Lombardy wine consortia, described enotourism as a strategic activity that can spread value beyond wineries to restaurants, lodging operators and other local businesses if regions have enough tools and investment capacity.

Danesi said EU resources could support not only winery equipment but also hospitality infrastructure and territorial organization such as signage, mobility links, accessibility and sustainable transport. He added that successful hospitality requires specific tourism, digital marketing and communications skills so operators can track visitor

flows, understand customer profiles and evaluate guest experiences.

For beverage companies more broadly, these debates matter because they show how Europe is trying to reshape alcohol policy through agricultural rules as much as through health or trade policy. Decisions on labeling, low- and no-alcohol categories, tourism funding and sustainability standards could influence how wine competes with beer, spirits and alcohol-free drinks across retail shelves and hospitality channels.

One of the most closely watched parts of the package concerns lower-alcohol wines. Legal experts at the conference reviewed reforms affecting dealcoholized wines, while Stefano Sequino, director of Consorzio Doc delle Venezie, focused on wines with naturally lower alcohol levels achieved through vineyard practices rather than cellar technology.

Sequino said steady growth in global no- and low-alcohol demand, combined with climate change’s effect on grape sugar levels and alcohol potential, makes it increasingly important to develop agronomic tools that preserve quality while producing wines with lower natural alcohol content. He argued that these wines should be clearly distinguished under regulatory and commercial rules from fully or partially dealcoholized wines because they result from decisions made in the vineyard rather than mechanical processing after fermentation.

That distinction could become commercially important if regulators accept separate definitions or labeling treatment. Producers say it would help them protect varietal identity and territorial character while opening new market opportunities among consumers seeking lighter styles without fully processed dealcoholization.

Legal specialists from Ugivi told attendees that beyond its specific measures, the wine package also introduces broader harmonization across regulations while giving member states, interprofessional organizations and producer groups more room to act. They said some provisions strengthen consumer protection while also expanding guidance around pricing orientation for grapes, musts and bulk wines destined for protected designations or geographical indications.

The political backdrop is now shifting quickly. Recarte referred to a new roadmap toward CAP talks that recently included an event organized by CEEV in Taranto with European Commissioner Christophe Hansen. Industry leaders see that phase as decisive because many fear that without firm inclusion in CAP law, recent gains could be diluted or reversed during wider negotiations over farm spending priorities.

For now, there is broad agreement inside much of the wine sector that February’s package was an important step. But there is far less agreement on how oversupply should be handled before harvest or how far Brussels should go in giving local groups power over production controls. That tension is likely to intensify as inventories remain high and producers try to balance crisis management with longer-term goals on competitiveness, tourism development and lower-alcohol innovation.