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Valpolicella producers cut bottlings to protect wine values

The region’s annual report showed 2025 output fell 3% as wineries prioritized pricing discipline over higher volumes in a weaker red wine market.

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Valpolicella’s wine industry is trying to protect value rather than chase volume as producers face a weaker international climate and a more cautious market for red wine, according to the latest annual report presented Thursday by the Consorzio Vini Valpolicella in Venice.

Christian Marchesini, president of the consortium, said the priority is to manage production with balance and keep the denomination competitive over the long term. Speaking at the presentation of the sixth Valpolicella Annual Report at Palazzo Ferro Fini, he said the task is not to pursue higher output but to preserve the value of the appellation through measured production and continued investment in promotion.

The message comes from one of Italy’s most important wine territories, home to Amarone, Ripasso and Valpolicella wines, with an estimated business value of €600 million. The denomination stretches across 19 municipalities in the Verona area and includes more than 2,200 businesses spanning grape growers, winemakers and bottlers.

The report shows that vineyard area has stabilized at 8,614 hectares. Verona remains the leading municipality by planted area at 15%, followed by Negrar and San Pietro in Cariano at 13% each, and Illasi at 11%. Together, those four areas account for 52% of the denomination’s vineyard surface.

Valpolicella’s grape base also remains highly concentrated in traditional local varieties. Corvina represents 56% of claimed vineyard area, while Rondinella and Corvinone each account for 19%. Molinara holds 2%.

In 2025, grape production reached 840,510 quintals, with 327,545 quintals set aside for appassimento, the drying process used for wines such as Amarone and Recioto. That level was in line with 2016, according to the report.

Bottlings under the denomination totaled nearly 57.5 million bottles in 2025, down 3% from 2024. The decline affected all major categories. Amarone and Recioto fell to 13.58 million bottles, down 2.4%. Valpolicella Ripasso dropped to 27.37 million bottles, down 3.7%. Standard Valpolicella declined to 16.50 million bottles, down 2.7%.

The consortium described that trend as a normalization of volumes rather than a collapse in demand. For the broader beverage sector, that matters because Valpolicella is one of Italy’s benchmark red wine regions, and any sustained shift toward tighter supply management can influence export strategies, pricing and shelf positioning across premium imported wines in key markets including the United States.

The report also points to a mixed production structure inside the denomination. In smaller wineries, basic Valpolicella Doc accounts for about 40% of output. In small-to-medium, medium-to-large and large companies, Ripasso is the leading category at roughly 45% to 50% of production. Amarone and Recioto remain steady across all company sizes, representing between 19% and 26% of portfolios.

That balance is central to how producers are trying to defend margins in a period marked by geopolitical tension and economic uncertainty. Marchesini said wineries and the consortium are addressing those pressures together with a long-term view.

Regional officials used the event to reinforce that strategy. Alberto Stefani, president of the Veneto region, said Valpolicella shows that quality and identity matter more than quantity in sustaining market value during difficult periods. He linked the denomination’s standing to its historic local grapes and to a wine culture rooted in the Verona countryside.

The presentation also served as a lead-in to “Venezia Superiore,” an event focused on Valpolicella wines in Venice. More than 30 labels of Valpolicella Doc and Valpolicella Doc Superiore from 19 producers were scheduled to be poured Thursday evening at Teson Piccolo della Pescheria di Rialto on the Grand Canal. The wines were to be served chilled at 6 to 8 degrees Celsius, an approach meant to highlight freshness in styles often associated with fuller-bodied reds.

International promotion remains part of the denomination’s strategy even as volumes soften. Last year, the consortium organized 27 promotional activities in 16 countries across five continents, including Argentina, Australia, South Korea, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Poland, Serbia, Singapore, Sweden, Britain and the United States.

For U.S. importers and distributors, those efforts suggest that Valpolicella producers are still investing in market presence even while trimming output. That combination could help support pricing discipline if lower bottlings persist and if producers continue steering consumers toward higher-value categories such as Amarone and Ripasso rather than competing on volume alone.