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France’s wine harvest could fall to a 70-year low in 2026.

Extreme heat and drought have reduced yields, forcing earlier picking across key regions including Burgundy.

Wednesday, September 23, 2026



France’s wine industry is heading toward one of its weakest harvests in decades as extreme heat and drought cut yields, speed up ripening, and add new pressure to a sector already dealing with high costs and softer demand.

The French Agriculture Ministry has warned that national wine output in 2026 could fall to its lowest level in about 70 years. Official estimates cited by the government's statistics agency, Agreste, put this year's production at under 34 million hectoliters, down 6% from 2025 and 17% below the five-year average.

If confirmed, the drop would mark a third straight year of lower production and deepen concern across one of France's most important agricultural and export industries. France is one of the world's leading wine exporters, so a smaller harvest there could tighten global supply, support higher prices in some categories, and force importers, distributors, and beverage companies to rethink purchasing contracts and export plans.

Officials and producers say climate change is now showing up clearly in the timing and quality of the grape harvest. Higher temperatures and prolonged dry conditions have pushed grapes to ripen earlier than usual, shortening the window for picking and forcing wineries to mobilize workers and equipment faster than in the past. Growers also face more uncertainty because changing weather patterns can quickly alter the ideal harvest date.

In Burgundy, the grape harvest began on Aug. 14 this year, which the French wine union described as the earliest start ever recorded in the region. That shift illustrates how quickly the growing calendar is changing in parts of the country known for cooler conditions and tightly managed production.

The damage has not been evenly spread across France's wine regions. According to the report, traditionally cooler areas such as the Loire Valley and Champagne have been especially affected by the heat. By contrast, some parts of southern France, including Bordeaux and Languedoc-Roussillon, have posted production gains compared with last year, showing that local conditions still vary sharply even within the same country.

The broader national picture, however, remains negative. France experienced one of the hottest summers in its history, with repeated heat waves and temperatures rising above 40C in several areas. Dry soils, intense sun exposure, and stress on the vines reduced grape development and in some cases caused fruit to shrivel before harvest teams could reach the fields. Those conditions reversed earlier hopes for a stronger crop after a more favorable spring.

The production decline comes at a difficult time for wine growers and producers beyond the vineyard. The sector is also facing rising production costs, slower sales, and weaker domestic consumption. Those pressures are weighing on smaller businesses in particular. According to the report, the number of wine-sector business closures nearly tripled between 2019 and 2025.

That economic strain is becoming more serious as climate-related disruptions grow harder to treat as isolated events. Earlier harvests can raise labor costs because producers need larger crews on shorter notice. Sudden heat spikes can also affect grape balance and style, creating quality concerns in regions built on long-standing production rules and established flavor profiles. Producers then have to decide whether to change vineyard practices, adopt different grape varieties, or adjust market strategies while still working within France’s strict appellation system.

The industry’s challenges are therefore not limited to one poor season. Growers are increasingly having to adapt to a production cycle that no longer follows historical patterns. For many producers, especially those in premium regions where tradition plays a large role in branding and regulation, that adaptation is likely to be expensive and slow.

The consequences could extend well beyond France. A weaker French harvest can influence the broader beverage market because French wine occupies a large share of premium export channels and global restaurant, retail, and hospitality sales. Lower availability could push buyers toward substitute origins, alter inventory planning, and increase competition for limited supply in some segments. Any sustained rise in prices would also be felt across the chain, from importers and wholesalers to retailers and consumers.

Trade conditions are adding another layer of uncertainty. Although the production outlook is being driven mainly by weather and climate pressures, the sector is also operating in an environment shaped by international tariff threats and shifting export demand. That makes it harder for producers to plan around a smaller crop, especially when margins are already under pressure.

French winemakers now face a difficult harvest season in which climate risk, economic weakness, and changing market conditions are all meeting at once. The speed with which growers and producers can adjust farming methods, grape choices, and commercial strategies is likely to play a major role in how much further the industry can absorb repeated losses in output.