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Champagne’s grape harvest is expected to fall by about half after frost and heatwaves.

Producers are tapping reserve wines to offset the shortfall from a crop that growers call exceptional.

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Champagne producers are turning to reserve wines after spring frosts and summer heatwaves sharply reduced this year’s grape harvest in one of France’s most important wine regions, even as growers say the quality of the fruit could be among the strongest

in years.

In Champagne, where houses including Moët & Chandon and Bollinger produce wines that are sold around the world, the harvest moved forward so quickly that some growers cut short their summer vacations and seasonal pickers were called back earlier than planned. Maxime Toubart, co-president of Comité Champagne, known as the CIVC, said the pace of the season left many in the region scrambling.

“We were not quite ready,” Toubart told reporters.

France’s Agriculture Ministry said on Monday that wine production in the Champagne region was expected to fall by about half from the previous year. That estimate gives a broad picture of the damage from weather extremes, though producers note that the final commercial impact may differ because Champagne houses can rely on reserve wines from stronger harvests.

That reserve system is a central part of how the region manages supply. Most Champagne is made by blending wines from several harvests rather than depending on a single vintage. That gives producers more room to absorb a weak year than many still wine regions have. Even so, a smaller crop can still affect production plans, inventories, and costs, especially if some houses decide to conserve part of their reserves for future use instead of fully replacing the missing volume now.

Toubart said some producers may prefer to keep part of their reserve wine for later blends or simply bottle less this year. The decision will likely vary by house and by grower, depending on stock levels, commercial strategy, and views on future harvest risk.

The pressure on Champagne comes after several years in which the industry has already adjusted production targets in response to softer demand. Global alcohol consumption has been declining, and economic uncertainty has weighed on consumer spending in many markets. Producers have also been watching the possible effect of U.S. tariff policy on exports, an important issue for a region that depends heavily on international sales.

This year’s harvest has also shown how climate shifts are changing the rhythm of wine production in France, the world’s second-largest wine producer. The extreme conditions that hit the country pushed grape picking to some of the earliest dates on record in several regions, including Champagne. Frost in the spring cut potential yields early in the growing season, and later heatwaves added stress as the grapes matured.

Growers and trade officials say the reduced volume has been partly offset by very good fruit quality. They described the 2026 wine as exceptional, helped by ripe grapes and the absence of mildew, a fungal disease that can seriously damage vineyards in wetter years. For producers, that has offered some relief after a season marked by lower yields.

“The fact that the quality is there makes the lackluster yield a bit easier to swallow,” Sebastien Debuisson, technical director of the CIVC, said.

But the same hot weather that helped ripen the fruit has created another challenge in the cellar. Producers say alcohol levels are running high, which can complicate winemaking in a region known for balance, freshness, and precision. Managing those richer musts and preserving the style associated with Champagne may require more careful technical decisions during fermentation and blending.

The situation matters beyond one French wine region because Champagne sits at the center of the global sparkling wine trade. A weaker harvest in Champagne can influence how houses use inventories, how they schedule bottlings, and how much flexibility they have on future releases. It can also affect costs tied to blending and winemaking when weather produces riper fruit with higher alcohol levels. For the broader beverage sector, the season is another sign that climate volatility is becoming a direct operating issue for producers of premium wines and other drinks that depend on stable agricultural supply.

Producers in Champagne have long relied on reserve stocks to smooth out years like this one, and that mechanism should help limit short-term disruption. Still, the combination of frost, heat, earlier harvest dates, and changing demand leaves the region balancing two very different realities at once: less wine to work with, and fruit that many growers believe could produce some of the best bottles of the year.