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Italian report details how certified vines are screened before reaching vineyards

Nursery controls verify grapevine identity, test for viruses, document plant origins before growers make long-term vineyard investments.

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Italy’s wine industry group Unione Italiana Vini said the quality of a vineyard is shaped before any vine is planted, when growers choose the propagation material used to establish new rows. In a report published by Il Corriere Vinicolo, specialists from the Centro Attività Vivaistiche described how Italy’s nursery certification system checks grapevine plants for varietal identity, plant health and traceability before they reach the field.

The article, published on September 29, explains that certification is a central step in the grape supply chain because it follows the multiplication of vines and verifies, under rules tied to each category of material, the characteristics of plants destined for growers. The focus is on barbatelle, the young grafted vines that are planted to create productive vineyards expected to remain in service for many years.

According to the contribution, the system begins with genetic and varietal conformity. In Italy, the registration of grape varieties and clones in the national vine variety register requires proof that they are distinct, uniform and stable. In mother plant fields, ampelographic checks are used to confirm that plants match the declared variety. When doubts arise, those field observations can be supported by DNA analysis.

The phytosanitary side of certification is equally important, the authors wrote. Official inspections and laboratory testing are used to detect certain grapevine viruses, with different testing frequencies depending on the stage of multiplication. The report says the controls are designed to monitor health status throughout the nursery chain rather than only at the final planting stage.

The article also outlines the legal framework and the main categories of grapevine material used in Italy: initial, basic, certified and standard. Certified material comes from a controlled production chain and is used to establish commercial vineyards. Standard material is also subject to the required controls and can meet the needs of varieties for which registered clones are not available.

The contribution pays particular attention to viral diseases that can be transmitted through propagation material and to pathogens that require continued surveillance. Among the threats cited are grapevine Pinot gris virus and the virus associated with red blotch disease. The authors stress that prevention is critical because viral diseases of the vine cannot be cured once infected plants are in the field.

That point carries practical implications beyond nurseries. For wine producers, and potentially for other parts of the beverage sector tied to grape supply, the use of certified planting material can lower the risk of losses caused by infected vines, reduce the chance of costly replanting and help stabilize production from new vineyard investments over time. Those effects depend on many factors in the field, but the health status of young vines is one of the earliest variables growers can control.

The report was written by Stefano Salute, Marco Cardoni, Silvia Loreti, Elena Tura, Marco Pancaldi and Rino Credi of the Centro Attività Vivaistiche. It appeared in issue 30/2026 of Il Corriere Vinicolo, the publishing arm linked to Unione Italiana Vini, and was presented as an overview of how certified grapevine material is evaluated before

planting.

The source notes that traceability is part of the value of certification. Because vineyards are long-term agricultural investments, information about the origin and status of plant material can affect not only agronomic planning but also financial decisions by growers and wineries. A vineyard planted with material that later proves incorrect or infected can face years of reduced performance before problems become fully visible.

By setting checks at more than one point in the propagation process, the certification framework aims to address risks early. The article indicates that varietal correspondence is not treated as a simple label issue but as a technical requirement verified through field observation and, when necessary, molecular tools. On the health side, official inspections and lab tests are intended to identify infections before vines are distributed on a wide scale.

The publication does not present certification as a guarantee against every future vineyard problem. Instead, it describes it as a structured control system that supports better planting decisions by confirming identity, monitoring sanitary conditions and documenting the production chain. In the case of viruses that spread through plant material and cannot be cured later, that early control is presented as decisive before young vines leave the nursery and enter commercial vineyards.