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French farm union urges rollback of alcohol ad law for wine producers

Coordination Rurale says costs rose 50% in five years, exports fell 20% in a decade, leaving vine removals as the default response.

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France’s Coordination Rurale, a farm union that represents growers including wine producers, called on Tuesday for a broad reset of wine policy, arguing that French viticulture is facing a deep structural crisis that cannot be addressed only by grubbing up vines, distilling surplus output, and subsidizing losses.

In a statement published on October 6, the union said French wine has been hit by rising costs, weaker domestic demand, lower export volumes, tighter regulation, and growing pressure on water access. It urged the government to rewrite or even scrap the Évin law, which restricts alcohol advertising in France, and to cut labor costs, simplify regulation, and speed water-storage projects for vineyards.

The statement lays out a political and economic agenda at a sensitive moment for one of France’s most important agricultural sectors. France remains one of the world’s biggest wine producers, and any change to marketing rules, labor charges, or irrigation policy could have effects beyond vineyards, including for spirits and the broader beverage business that depends on French production, branding, and exports.

Coordination Rurale described the situation as the worst crisis in the modern history of French wine. The union said production costs have risen 50% over the past five years. It said domestic consumption has fallen 60% over the past 70 years and cited an expected further decline of 15% in the coming decade. It also said export volumes have dropped 20% over the past 10 years.

The union pointed to the scale of vineyard removals as evidence of the strain on the industry. It said 24,000 hectares were grubbed up in 2023, which it compared to the size of the Beaujolais vineyard area. It added that 27,926 hectares of new grubbing-up requests had already been filed in 2026, covering 5,823 applications. Those figures, it said, show a restructuring process that is too often becoming the default answer to the downturn.

At the center of the union’s message is a demand to change the rules governing how wine can be promoted in France. Coordination Rurale said the Évin law has become too restrictive and prevents small producers from simply explaining their work, their terroir, and their know-how without legal risk. The union argued that French wine is being treated in the same way as industrial alcohol and said this weakens the sector’s ability to defend its place in French culture and at home-market sales.

The statement also placed wine and spirits together in that argument, saying France should be able to promote exceptional products including Cognac and Armagnac more confidently. It went further by calling for schools to do more to pass on knowledge of French food and wine heritage to younger generations.

Beyond the cultural case, the union presented a detailed economic program. It said water access has become a basic issue for the future of many vineyard regions and called for a revision of water law, the expansion of hillside reservoirs, and major infrastructure work to connect water basins. According to the union, the difficulties

seen this year show that irrigation is no longer optional in many areas.

Coordination Rurale also said winegrowers are facing an accumulation of administrative and environmental requirements that raise costs and consume time. It cited electronic invoicing, digitized phytosanitary calendars, QR code obligations, Adelphe compliance, and newer concerns around PFAS as examples of rules that have been added without older ones being removed. The union called for a full audit of public bodies including INAO, ANSES, and FranceAgriMer to eliminate overlap. It also proposed a broader review of regulations introduced over the past 40 years to measure their concrete effects on production, marketing, and sales.

The union said no active substance, including copper, should be banned unless a workable alternative is already available. Otherwise, it warned, growers could be pushed into agronomic dead ends. It also called for the abolition of ANSES, France's food and environmental health agency, and for a more uniform European approval system for crop-protection products.

On labor, Coordination Rurale asked for a full removal of employee and employer social charges at the minimum wage level, with the relief tapering gradually up to 1.8 times the minimum wage. It also called for better value sharing with supermarkets and restaurants and for more transparency on margins, including disclosure of the markup at the end of the chain, especially on restaurant wine lists.

Trade policy was another major part of the union's platform. Coordination Rurale repeated its opposition to the Mercosur trade deal and to broader multilateral agreements that it says sacrifice French agriculture. It said France should take back control of trade negotiations and favor bilateral agreements negotiated sector by sector.

The group also raised concerns about a land-investment project involving 30,000 hectares in Bordeaux, saying it could be one response to the problem of uprooted vineyards but warning of possible environmental drift depending on how the venture is structured. The union said it would watch the project closely and argued that agricultural plans should not undermine production freedom in local territories.

Some of the proposals in the statement go well beyond vineyard economics and would likely face strong political resistance, particularly any attempt to repeal the Évin law or dismantle health and regulatory agencies. Even so, the union’s intervention reflects the breadth of pressure facing French wine producers, from weak demand and export challenges to climate stress and regulatory costs.

The statement did not announce immediate government action, and no response from French authorities was included with the union’s publication. But the demands place wine policy squarely inside a wider debate over how France balances public health rules, environmental regulation, water management, trade policy, and the competitiveness of a sector that remains central to the country’s agricultural and beverage economy.