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French Court Rejects Bid to Restore Four Copper Vineyard Products

The Melun ruling leaves ANSES suspensions in place during a broader challenge watched closely by wine growers.

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A French administrative court has rejected an emergency request from Spanish manufacturer IQV to block the suspension of authorizations for four copper-based plant protection products, leaving the products off the market for now and extending a

broader dispute over how France regulates tools used in vineyards.

The ruling was issued Thursday by the administrative court in Melun in a fast-track proceeding tied to decisions made by ANSES, France's health and safety agency, on July 15, 2025. According to the court order cited by the CNAOC, the judge found that the arguments presented by IQV did not appear, at this stage of the case, strong enough to create serious doubt about the legality of the agency's decision.

In practical terms, that means the suspensions remain in place while the underlying legal dispute continues. The emergency judge ruled only on whether the measures should be paused immediately, not on the full merits of the case.

The case is being closely watched in French viticulture because copper-based products are widely used to protect vines, especially against fungal diseases. For wine producers, including many organic growers, the loss of four products could further limit disease-control options during the growing season. It also keeps alive a larger dispute over whether crop-protection approvals are being interpreted in a way that is consistent across the European Union, a question that could affect production costs, yields and competitive conditions for wine and other agricultural producers tied to the beverage sector.

The CNAOC, which represents French wine appellations, said the wine sector had backed IQV's court challenge and had argued that there was agricultural urgency because of what it described as a lack of effective alternatives and the economic and technical consequences for growers. France Vin Bio and the FNSEA, the main French farm union, also supported that position, according to the organization.

Those groups said they regretted the ruling and the temporary loss of four products from growers' available disease-control tools. At the same time, they argued that the decision should not be read as a rejection of the sector's broader case, saying the judge did not dismiss the existence of agricultural urgency.

In a statement relayed by the CNAOC, France Vin Bio President Sébastien David said the judge's position was that, unlike in an earlier case involving another company, the scientific evidence submitted by IQV did not at this stage create serious doubt about

the legality of the ANSES decision. He said that meant the court would rule case by case and called on companies to present more structured filings when bringing appeals.

The latest order stands in contrast to a decision from the same court on March 31, 2026, in a separate dispute involving COSACO. In that earlier case, the judge granted emergency relief and suspended ANSES decisions concerning several copper-based products. The CNAOC described that ruling at the time as a major victory for the sector.

The different outcomes suggest that the court is examining each manufacturer’s file on its own evidence rather than issuing a broad judgment on copper products as a category. That distinction is central for growers and suppliers because it means future cases may turn on the specific scientific and legal record attached to each product authorization.

The French wine organizations used Thursday’s ruling to renew criticism of what they say is an overly restrictive approach by ANSES. Anthony Brun, who chairs the CNAOC’s sustainability commission, said in a statement that the industry believes some withdrawal and non-renewal decisions are based on an interpretation that is too narrow, disconnected from field conditions and out of step with practices in other EU member states. Jérôme Despey, head of the FNSEA’s viticulture commission, said the ruling reinforced the sector’s determination to defend French growers’ production capacity and competitiveness.

Those statements reflect the industry’s position. The source material did not include a fresh response from ANSES to Thursday’s ruling, nor a separate public comment from IQV beyond the legal challenge itself.

The dispute goes beyond the four products at issue in this case. French wine groups say they want a European framework that is more harmonized, arguing that different national interpretations can create competitive distortions inside the single market. Their concern is that if one member state removes or restricts crop-protection tools more aggressively than others, growers in that country can face higher disease pressure and higher costs than competitors elsewhere in Europe.

That argument has particular weight in viticulture because copper remains an important input in many disease-management programs, especially where growers have fewer synthetic alternatives available or where production standards limit the products they can use. Any reduction in available copper formulations can have direct effects on vineyard practices, and over time could influence grape quality, volumes and supply conditions for wine producers.

At the same time, the legal and regulatory issue is sensitive because copper use has long been debated in Europe on environmental and health grounds. ANSES has the authority to assess and regulate plant protection products in France, and court challenges of its decisions can hinge on both scientific evidence and administrative law.

For now, the Melun court’s order leaves ANSES’s suspension of the four IQV products in force. The larger legal fight remains open, and industry groups said they would continue supporting companies in future copper-related litigation while also working with public authorities, manufacturers and ANSES on possible technical solutions, including conditions of use.