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Inter Rhône extends reference prices to Rhône wines under geographical indications

The trade body said the benchmarks will guide negotiations without creating fixed price bands for buyers or sellers.

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Inter Rhône, the trade body for the Rhône Valley wine sector, said Friday it is introducing reference prices for wines sold under geographical indications, extending a system it had already begun using for organic wines and those certified for High

Environmental Value, or HVE.

The move was announced on October 9 and was reported by the French agricultural news service Agra. According to Agra, the new reference prices apply to wine under geographical indication in the Rhône Valley and are meant to serve as orientation points for the market rather than fixed or mandatory price limits.

That distinction is central to the measure. Inter Rhône is not adopting the so-called price “tunnels” included in France’s farm emergency law, a mechanism that can frame negotiations within preset bands. Instead, the organization is presenting the new figures as guidance. In practical terms, that means the benchmarks are intended to inform discussions between sellers and buyers without creating what the group described as an arbitrary corridor for transactions.

The decision follows an earlier step taken less than a year ago, when Inter Rhône introduced similar reference prices for organic wines and for wines carrying France’s HVE label, which is used for farms and vineyards that meet environmental standards. By extending the approach to wines under geographical indication, the trade body is broadening the use of market signals across a larger share of Rhône Valley production.

The Rhône Valley is one of France’s main wine-producing regions, and pricing has become a sensitive issue as parts of the industry face weak demand, tighter margins, and broader instability in the wine market. Against that backdrop, reference prices can give growers, cooperatives, merchants, and other buyers a common point of comparison when they negotiate contracts or bulk sales. They do not remove commercial freedom, but they can give both sides a clearer starting point in a market where pricing can quickly become contentious.

Agra said the new system comes as the wine sector remains under pressure. That context helps explain why Inter Rhône is moving to publish orientation prices while stopping short of formal price bands. A benchmark can be used to improve transparency and reduce uncertainty, while a stricter banded system can raise concerns about rigidity or about distorting normal negotiations.

The announcement is also relevant beyond the Rhône Valley because it points to how French wine organizations are trying to respond to market stress without fully replacing open price formation. For beverage companies, traders, and distributors, the change may offer a better read on supply-side expectations in a region that is important to the broader wine business. If the benchmarks are widely used, they could affect how contracts are discussed, how inventories are valued, and how margins are managed across parts of the wine trade.

At the same time, the measure does not amount to a controlled pricing system. Inter Rhône's choice to avoid the legal "tunnel" approach suggests that the organization wants to provide guidance without turning the benchmarks into a hard floor or ceiling. That may make the tool easier to accept across a market where producers and buyers often have different views on how much structure pricing should have.

The information made public so far does not include the detailed price levels attached to the new references. But the direction is clear: Inter Rhône is giving the market additional indicators for wines under geographical indication after first testing the approach on environmentally certified segments. In a period of strain for the wine industry, those indicators could become an important element in commercial talks across the Rhône Valley.