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European Parliament Rejects Push to Label Wine Harmful

Officials in Spain’s biggest wine region said the move spares producers tougher bottle warnings, protecting an industry they value at €2 billion.

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The government of Castilla-La Mancha said Tuesday that it welcomed what it described as a European Parliament decision to reject labeling wine as a harmful product in the European Union’s updated alcohol policy strategy, calling the move important for one of Spain’s largest wine-producing regions.

José Manuel Caballero, the region’s second vice president, made the comments in Brussels during the 173rd plenary session of the European Committee of the Regions, where he appeared alongside Nazareth Rodrigo, director general for European affairs in the regional government. According to the Castilla-La Mancha government, the Parliament’s updated approach explicitly rejected bringing back language that would classify wine as harmful and ruled out proposals for stronger warning labels on wine bottles.

Caballero said Castilla-La Mancha had defended that position in European forums and viewed the outcome as significant for its wine industry. His remarks reflect the political sensitivity of alcohol labeling in the EU, where public health policy, agricultural interests and consumer information often collide. For the beverage sector, the Parliament’s stance may signal the current direction of the European debate on labeling rules, with possible effects on how wine is marketed and what information producers may eventually be required to place on bottles.

The regional government framed the issue as especially important because of wine’s economic weight in Castilla-La Mancha. It said the region is Spain’s leading wine-producing area and its largest wine exporter, and that about half of Spanish wine comes from Castilla-La Mancha. Caballero said 80,000 people in the region depend directly on the wine sector and that roughly 500 wineries and cooperatives operate there. He put the sector’s economic impact at about €2 billion.

He also pointed to export figures to underline the industry’s importance. Caballero said the latest closed data available, through July, showed wine export billings of €440 million. The regional government presented those figures as evidence that decisions taken in Brussels on labeling, agriculture and trade can quickly affect employment and business conditions in Castilla-La Mancha.

Caballero said the European Parliament’s position meant that proposals for severe warnings on wine bottles had been left aside. He also said that, in his view, wine has a clear cultural place in many EU countries. In that context, he said some voices in the European Commission and the Parliament have defended the idea that moderate wine consumption should be considered within the framework of the Mediterranean diet. He

presented that line of argument as part of the broader case made by wine-producing regions against singling out wine in EU alcohol policy.

The comments on wine came as Caballero used the Brussels meeting to raise another issue that he said concerns the region: the future size of the EU budget. He warned against any reduction in the next multiannual financial framework and said Castilla-La Mancha would oppose cuts that could affect the Common Agricultural Policy or cohesion policy.

According to Caballero, the presidency held by the Irish government has put forward a proposal to reduce the EU's long-term budget by 8% over the next six years. He described that prospect as bad news for regions such as Castilla-La Mancha, which rely heavily on EU support for agriculture, local development and regional investment. He argued that Europe needs a larger budget, not a smaller one, if its institutions want to have a stronger effect on the daily lives of people in member states, regions and municipalities.

Caballero linked the budget debate to a wider agenda discussed at the plenary session, including support by regions and cities for Ukrainians displaced by war, the car industry, employment policy, social welfare and health issues such as cardiovascular disease. He said those topics show how much the EU now affects local and regional life across the bloc's 27 countries, and he argued that Europe's role should not be limited to regulation and legislation but should also include concrete policies backed by funding.

He said Castilla-La Mancha would not accept what he called any backward step in EU financing if it damaged farm policy or cohesion funds. In his remarks, he said 40 years of European membership had shown that EU policies and budgets support development, convergence, cohesion and trust in democratic institutions. He argued that maintaining citizens' confidence in European institutions requires the EU to remain a visible and effective actor in regions and municipalities, which in his view makes budget levels a central political issue.

The regional government’s statement did not provide further detail on the specific parliamentary text or vote count behind the alcohol policy change cited by Caballero. But its message was clear: Castilla-La Mancha sees the reported rejection of tougher wine labeling as both a political win in Brussels and a practical relief for a sector that is deeply tied to the region’s economy. At the same time, it is trying to build support against any broader EU budget cuts that could reduce agricultural or regional funding in the years ahead.