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French Winegrowers Urge Government to Halt Vine Disease Control Overhaul

They say the proposed shift toward containment of flavescence dorée could weaken surveillance, spread infections, increase treatment costs

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French independent winegrowers are pressing the government to pause a planned overhaul of the mandatory control system for flavescence dorée, a grapevine disease, saying the proposed changes could weaken prevention and raise costs across the wine sector.

In a statement published Monday, November 2, the Centre-Val de Loire branch of Vignerons Indépendants said it was seeking guarantees over the changes being considered in the rules for fighting the disease. The group said a revision presented by the Agriculture Ministry would give more weight to containing outbreaks rather than eradicating them, including in areas where eradication is still considered possible.

The organization said it feared that approach would reduce the strength of collective monitoring and increase the risk that the disease could spread. It also warned of a possible increase in insecticide use and a shift in costs onto winegrowers. Those concerns go beyond farm management. Any weakening of disease surveillance or increase in treatment needs could affect vineyard yields, production costs, and the long-term supply of grapes used by wine producers, making the issue important for the broader beverages industry.

The statement said the matter had already been raised by the board of Vignerons Indépendants de France during a meeting in Paris on October 21. It added that a common position was then developed with wine-sector organizations gathered within the FMSE, a mutual fund that compensates growers for mandatory vine removals linked to flavescence dorée.

According to the group, a letter was sent to the agriculture minister on October 30 asking for the adoption timetable for the reform to be suspended and for a national consultation to be opened. The winegrowers said they want eradication to remain the guiding principle of disease control, along with a lasting commitment from the state to vineyard monitoring and protection.

The dispute centers on how France should manage a plant health threat that already requires coordinated action. Under the current framework, growers can face obligations tied to surveillance and to the removal of infected vines. The winegrowers’ concern is that if the state puts more emphasis on containment in places where eradication

remains achievable, infections could become harder and more expensive to control over time.

The source statement did not give details of the ministry’s full draft text or say when the reform had been scheduled for adoption. It did, however, make clear that the organizations involved want the process slowed before any new rules are finalized.

For growers, the issue is also financial. The FMSE’s role in compensating mandatory uprooting shows that disease policy can directly affect how losses are shared between the public system and producers. If outbreaks were to spread more widely, growers say the burden could increase through more treatments, more vine removals, or broader production losses.

The Agriculture Ministry’s response was not included in the statement published by the regional federation. The organizations behind the letter are now calling for a broader national discussion before the government changes the rules that govern one of the most sensitive plant health controls in French vineyards.