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Central Italy’s wine regions cut 2026 yields to curb swelling cellar stocks

Marche and Abruzzo imposed lower limits on Verdicchio and Montepulciano after Italian wine inventories climbed 7.2% to 47.7 million hectoliters

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Wine authorities in Italy’s Marche and Abruzzo regions are cutting how much wine can be marketed from the 2026 harvest as producers try to deal with rising cellar stocks and weaker balance between supply and demand.

The measures affect some of central Italy’s best-known denominations, including Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi DOC in Marche and Montepulciano d’Abruzzo DOC in Abruzzo. In both cases, consortia and regional authorities are using lower yield limits and temporary storage restrictions to keep part of the harvest off the market and reduce pressure on prices.

The moves come as wine inventories across Italy remain high. According to the latest Cantina Italia report published by the ICQRF, Italian cellars held 47.7 million hectoliters of wine as of Oct. 31, up 7.2% from the same point a year earlier. That has sharpened a debate inside the industry over how to plan harvests when wine availability is growing faster than the market’s ability to absorb it.

In Marche, the Istituto Marchigiano Tutela Vini asked the regional government to extend production limits for Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi DOC, one of the area’s main appellations. The request would keep the limit at 110 quintals of grapes per hectare, down from the 140 quintals allowed under the denomination’s standard rules. That amounts to a reduction of about 21% in the maximum yield that can be claimed for the DOC.

The proposal also includes a temporary block, through June 30, 2027, on up to 21 quintals per hectare of grapes produced above the reduced threshold. The aim is to contain wine volumes left in cellars after the especially abundant 2025 harvest and to limit the risk that excess supply could add further downward pressure on prices.

Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi covers about 1,900 hectares across 25 municipalities and produces roughly 90,000 hectoliters of bottled wine a year. Even with the inventory concerns, the denomination has shown some commercial resilience. According to figures cited by the institute, bottled volumes rose 2.7% in the first half of 2026, while sales through domestic distribution posted only a limited decline.

Alberto Mazzoni, the institute’s director, said the work ahead rests on two tracks: managing volumes and supporting promotion. The institute has indicated that Marche wines need a continuing promotional campaign lasting at least four years.

In Abruzzo, the 2026 harvest measures have already been approved by the regional government following a proposal from the Consorzio Tutela Vini d’Abruzzo. For Montepulciano d’Abruzzo DOC, the maximum yield that can be assigned to the denomination was cut from 150 to 135 quintals per hectare.

Under that system, 110 quintals per hectare can be used freely, while the remaining 25 quintals form a harvest reserve that cannot be marketed until at least June 30, 2028. The mechanism allows authorities to hold back part of the production under administrative control while reducing the amount immediately available for sale.

Specific restrictions also apply to Pecorino IGT Terre d’Abruzzo, also known as Terre Abruzzesi. For the 2026 campaign, the maximum claimable yield is set at 140 quintals per hectare. Production above that level, from 140.01 to 220 quintals per hectare, must be placed in storage until Sept. 30, 2027, unless the measure is extended.

Those decisions were made against a backdrop of already large stocks. According to data released by the consortium, cellars held more than 1.08 million hectoliters of Montepulciano d’Abruzzo DOC and about 240,000 hectoliters of different Pecorino types as of May 31. Consortium president Alessandro Nicodemi said the goal is to protect the balance between supply and demand and to avoid excess availability that could hurt prices and the profitability of wine businesses.

The measures taken in Marche and Abruzzo work at different points in the production chain. Lowering the yield that can be claimed under a denomination reduces the amount of grapes that can be marketed under that name. Administrative blocking and harvest reserves, by contrast, do not eliminate production but delay when part of it can enter the market. That gives producers and regulators more flexibility if demand improves, but it also ties up inventory and requires more planning for storage space and sales timing.

For the beverage industry, the implications go beyond vineyard rules. Lower yield limits and mandatory reserves can reduce the volume of wine available for sale in the near term, while increasing storage needs and potentially affecting cash flow for wineries. If the restrictions help support prices, some growers and producers may protect margins. But if demand remains soft, the benefit could be limited and the cost of holding stock may continue to weigh on profitability.

The debate is not limited to Marche and Abruzzo. In Tuscany’s Maremma area, local consortium officials have argued for a different approach centered on structural changes rather than further cuts to formal yield ceilings. According to the consortium, actual vineyard output in Maremma is often already below the maximum levels allowed by denomination rules, so lowering those limits again might have only a modest effect on real production.

Its proposal is to act on vineyard potential instead, including a review of permits for new plantings and the possibility of targeted vine removals in less suitable areas. That position adds another layer to the wider discussion inside Italy’s wine sector: whether short-term stock management is enough, or whether deeper changes are needed to adapt production to shifting demand.

One factor in that discussion is changing consumer preference. The Maremma consortium has pointed to growing demand for white wines over reds, a trend that could force some regions to reconsider what they plant and promote. That matters in areas such as Abruzzo, where Montepulciano d’Abruzzo remains a major red wine category, and in Marche, where Verdicchio is a leading white denomination with stronger recent bottling data.

The broader issue is that high cellar stocks do not automatically mean wine is unsold. Some inventory reflects normal aging and release cycles. The pressure grows when sales slow and producers’ capital remains tied up longer than planned. In that setting, cutting marketable yields may help manage supply in the short term, but industry groups are also signaling that promotion, export access and closer alignment between production and consumer demand will remain central to the sector’s outlook.