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A Catalan wine institute joins a national study of biodiversity's effect on wine quality

Incavi and Vinyes Domènech will run trials in Montsant, testing cover crops and aromatic plants for effects on soil, vines and sensory profiles

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A Catalan wine research institute and a winery in northeastern Spain have joined a broader national project to study whether biodiversity in vineyards can shape the quality, aroma and sensory profile of wine.

The Institut Català de la Vinya i el Vi, known as Incavi, and the winery Vinyes Domènech are participating in the supra-regional operational group VINEURO, according to a statement released on Saturday, November 14, by the Catalan government's agriculture department. The project is designed to examine how biodiversity in wine-growing ecosystems affects wine quality and sensory characteristics.

The research and innovation initiative will test different vineyard management practices in both grape growing and winemaking. Among the measures under study are the introduction of aromatic and medicinal plants and the use of cover crops. The aim is to build scientific evidence on how those practices affect the vine, the soil and the wines produced from them.

Field trials will be carried out at Vinyes Domènech, a winery in the Montsant appellation of origin in Capçanes, Tarragona, between the Serra de Llaberia and Montalt mountain areas. Researchers plan to measure the impact of those strategies on vineyard performance, soil conditions and the final wines.

Incavi will contribute its experience in biodiversity applied to viticulture, along with its work in enological analysis and sensory evaluation, to monitor the trials, characterize the wines and study the results. The Catalan agriculture department said that role builds on knowledge gathered through earlier projects, including Life Biodivine and an operational group focused on biodiversity around vineyards and wine quality, and extends that work to a national scale.

Other participants in VINEURO include ITAGRA.CT, Bodegas Moha of the Rueda appellation, the University of Valladolid, Sociograph Neuromarketing and BIOVEGEN. The partners are working to develop tools that can support more sustainable production models.

The project is being carried out within the framework of the supra-regional operational groups of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability, known as EIP-Agri. It is funded through Spain’s 2023-27 Common Agricultural Policy strategic plan, with support from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

For the wine industry, the work could help provide practical criteria that link biodiversity, sustainability and product quality in a way that can be tested and transferred across growing regions. That matters for producers facing pressure to reduce the environmental impact of farming while protecting grape quality and the sensory identity of their wines. If the trials show consistent effects, the findings could help wineries and growers decide whether practices such as cover crops or aromatic plantings improve not only vineyard resilience but also the commercial and sensory value of the wines they sell.