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More than 95% of GWF members approve moratorium delaying grape payments

The vote clears the last major hurdle for the cooperative’s 2030 restructuring, with deferred claims preserved in full

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More than 95% of the members of Winzergemeinschaft Franken, a major German wine cooperative known as GWF, have approved a moratorium that postpones payment of money owed for grapes, giving the group fresh backing for a restructuring plan that

runs through 2030.

GWF said on Wednesday, November 25, that the vote met the approval threshold required for the moratorium and removed the last major obstacle to the next stage of its transformation. The cooperative said the deferred payment claims will remain valid in full, meaning members are not giving up their rights to the money but agreeing to receive it later to help stabilize the business.

The cooperative described the move as part of its plan, called Future and Performance 2030, which it is pursuing with members, customers and business partners. GWF said the combination of delayed grape payments and stronger equity will give it more room to invest over the next several years in sales, brand development and innovation.

Claus Hochrein, GWF’s chief executive, said the cooperative remains able to meet its current obligations. He said the company paid every bill that came due before the November 25 announcement, can do so now and expects to continue doing so. He also said member, customer and partner support would be used to keep producing wines and grape-based products in 2027 while the cooperative looks for new market opportunities.

The future plan approved unanimously by GWF’s supervisory board centers on stronger sales efforts, a product range more closely aligned with demand and better use of its production facilities for quality wines. GWF said the aim is to build an economically stronger cooperative that remains rooted in Franconia and provides dependable prospects for winegrowing families and employees.

The decision matters beyond GWF itself because of the cooperative’s scale in the German drinks industry. GWF says it is one of the six largest wine cooperatives in the country. It also says its growers cultivate more than 1,200 hectares of vineyards in the Franconian wine region, making the group an important channel for grape processing and wine marketing. Any financial stabilization at that level can affect supply, production planning and route-to-market decisions across the wine trade, and could also matter for related beverage segments if GWF follows through on plans to expand sales and adjust its portfolio to demand.

GWF said many family-run vineyards depend on the cooperative to process their grapes and sell their wines. The group added that the growers’ work helps maintain the vineyard landscape that shapes Franconia and supports tourism in the region. In its corporate description, GWF said it unites more than 860 winegrowers across the Franconian appellation, while the November 25 announcement referred to more than 1,000 active growers involved in the cooperative. In both cases, the organization presented itself as one of the central institutions in the regional wine economy.

The cooperative also pointed to a broader strategic shift in its beverage business. It said its Future Center for Non-Alcoholic Wine in Kitzingen is intended to help it tap the growing market for non-alcoholic and reduced-alcohol wines. That gives added weight to the restructuring effort, because the outcome may influence not only traditional Franconian wine production but also investment in categories that are expanding across Europe’s drinks sector.

GWF was founded in 1959 and says its portfolio covers the main grape varieties grown in Franconia. The cooperative said customer and business partner responses before the November 25 announcement had been positive and had gone beyond symbolism by supporting continued cooperation and joint market development in 2027.