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Viticulture: an indispensable thread in europe's fabric, associations claim

The cornerstone of European culture, viticulture, is now at the crux of a heated discourse

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The associations representing the wine sector have univocally declared, "Viticulture is essential in Europe," contradicting the findings of a recent study commissioned by the European Commission. The study, exploring the implications of the Sur regulation,

deems the predicted decline in grape production within the European Union as inconsequential, dismissing the crop as non-essential.

It is the associations representing Italy, France, and Spain, the triumvirate of European viticulture, that have risen in defense of the sector. The focus of their contention lies in the findings of the Commission's study into the impact of the Sur regulation. The Sur regulation is a framework aimed at ensuring sustainable use of plant protection products. The study forecasts a decrease in grape production, a consequence of reduced use of such products, but concludes that this downturn is insignificant due to grapes' perceived non-essential status.

European viticulture, according to the associations, is far from non-essential. The EU is the world's top wine producer, holding 45% of the global vineyard area. This significant sector boasts high-value addition, proving indispensable for many European rural areas. Furthermore, the industry generates millions of jobs and is a crucial contributor to the EU's trade balance.

The study, however, paints a different picture. It predicts a decline in grape production due to the decreased use of plant protection products, amounting to 18% in Spain, 20% in Italy, and 28% in France. And these estimates, the associations point out, disregard the looming impact of climate change.

The European Commission's view that the predicted drop in wine production would be irrelevant has been met with firm rebuttal from the associations. They argue that such a position disregards the wine sector's considerable economic, social, and cultural contribution to many EU regions. It is "totally unacceptable" that the European Commission, in their view, sanctions and foresees the penalization of a sector of such immense importance to the European economy.

The vineyards of Europe are not just sources of economic sustenance; they are the carriers of cultural heritage. And this heritage, like the vines themselves, needs careful nurturing. Wine operators and wineries have demonstrated a consistent commitment to ecological transition and sustainability. However, the associations argue, this commitment cannot thrive amidst unnecessary controversy and unrealistic regulations.

In their note, the associations call upon Member States and MEPs to adopt a clear stance on this issue, highlighting wine as not only an economic asset but also an essential cultural product of Europe. They further emphasize the need for support for the sector to continue its ecological transition efforts.

The associations conclude their statement with a call for the implementation of realistic regulations and an operational timeline. These, they believe, would facilitate the adoption of existing and prospective effective alternative solutions, allowing the wine sector to continue its invaluable contribution to the European fabric while adhering to the principles of environmental sustainability.

In the unfolding saga of viticulture's importance in Europe, it is clear that the wine sector's representative associations are ready to uphold the industry's value. As this discourse unfolds, it will be telling to see how the European Commission, Member States, and MEPs respond to these pressing concerns.