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Celebrating a Century: The Evolution of Table Grapes under the OIV

Table Grapes Take Center Stage in July Focus

Monday, July 8, 2024



As the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV) marks its centenary, the focus of its "12 months, 12 resolutions" initiative turns this July to the evolution and significance of table grapes. Over nearly a century, the production of table grapes has been a pivotal topic within the OIV, managed by the Sub-commission "Table Grapes, Raisins, and Unfermented Products" (SCRAISIN). Since its inception, SCRAISIN has

diligently worked on resolutions, surveys, and expert documents vital to this economically significant sector for many OIV member states.

Historically, one of the cornerstone standards was the Resolution OIV AG 13/54-VIT, "Definition of Table Grapes, Improvement of Technological Methods, Standardization, and Marketing of Table Grapes," adopted by the 34th OIV General Assembly in Paris in September 1954. This resolution defined table grapes as "the fruit of the vine intended primarily for fresh consumption and produced by special varieties or cultivated for this purpose." It also laid down crucial decisions, such as recognizing the enhancement of technological methods as a national or regional issue and stipulating that only a specific list of table grape varieties meant for export should be considered, excluding those for domestic consumption. Furthermore, it set a maturity standard based on the sugar-to-acid ratio (g/l of sugars and g/l of tartaric acid).

The General Assembly also endorsed the United Nations' recommendations on classifying table grapes into three quality categories and requested consultations among table grape-exporting member states to determine suitable packaging types. These decisions equipped the OIV with tools to engage significantly with other international organizations, such as the Codex Alimentarius, in establishing more standards, particularly in commercial aspects.

Luis Peres de Sousa, President of the SCRAISIN Sub-commission, reflecting on the 70 years since the adoption of Resolution OIV AG 13/54-VIT, acknowledges the extensive work and dedication of all experts and the structure of SCRAISIN. Initially, the focus was on fresh consumption table grapes, followed by raisins, which have high nutritional value, and more recently, grape juice. This is evident in resolutions like OIV-VITI 654-2021 "OIV Guidelines for Sustainable Production of Grape Juice, Concentrated Grape Juice, and Their Processing" and OIV-VITI 678A-2022 "Definition of Grape Nectar and Carbonated Grape Nectar." These resolutions underscore the importance of these products for human health, supported by ongoing actions in collaboration with the OIV's Safety and Health Commission.

Given that SCRAISIN deals with products for human consumption, such as fresh table grapes, raisins, and grape juice, the reduction of pesticide use has always been a concern for experts. This concern is currently addressed through new technological tools, such as physical methods to eliminate fungi and ongoing initiatives like organic table grape production and the elimination of synthetic pesticides. These factors also tackle other issues like sustainability (impact on biodiversity and ecosystems, microbiomes); economy (production costs, vine dormancy and the impact of climate change, efficient water use, mechanical harvesting technology for raisins in specific situations and its impact on product quality for the market); and social impact (working conditions).

Rodrigo Espindola, an expert from the Argentine Delegation in the SCRAISIN Sub-commission, highlights that global warming presents new challenges for scientists, experts, advisors, and farmers in the table grape and raisin production sector. The primary concern is around economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Today, consumers demand safety, quality, and good nutrition without adverse health impacts. Consequently, the sector is implementing new approaches based on good agricultural and manufacturing practices. The SCRAISIN Sub-commission of the OIV will address these demands with sustainability criteria, providing new recommendations, standards, and promoting new research findings and indexes. This must be accompanied by reviewing previous OIV resolutions and the necessity to offer meaningful responses to the population and new consumers, avoiding unsafe foods.

Moreover, SCRAISIN should support and promote sustainable and innovative non-alcoholic products to enhance market value, meeting consumer demand. As highlighted 70 years ago, it is essential to note that not all member states are the same, encouraging the application of different technologies. OIV countries have different cultures, but together they complement each other and contribute to better results, better resource utilization, and the development of table grape and raisin production.

In celebrating the OIV's centenary, it is evident that the legacy and future of table grape production continue to be of paramount importance, driven by innovation, sustainability, and international cooperation. As SCRAISIN leads these efforts, the evolution of standards and practices will ensure that the table grape industry thrives,

meeting the demands of a changing world and an ever-conscious consumer base.