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Italian Wine Industry to Combat Global Crises with Innovation and Quality Focus

Italy's Agriculture Minister Unveils Vision for Sustainable Wine Industry at OperaWine Event

Friday, July 26, 2024



Francesco Lollobrigida

In a recent interview with *Wine Spectator* during the "OperaWine: Finest Italian Wines" event in Verona, Italy's Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty, and Forests, Francesco Lollobrigida, shared his forward-looking vision for the Italian wine industry. The event, which heralds the start of the Vinitaly wine fair, gathers wine experts and producers worldwide to discuss the sector's challenges and opportunities.

Since assuming office in October 2022, Lollobrigida has emphasized sustainable agriculture and the protection of Italy's rich vinicultural heritage. In the interview, he addressed the global crisis facing the wine industry, exacerbated by the recent pandemic and global instability. He underscored the importance of viticulture not only for the economy but also for the conservation of landscapes and the environment. Regions like Franciacorta, Prosecco, Chianti, Montalcino, Etna, and Puglia are pivotal not only for their economic contributions but also for their role in preserving Italy's natural environment.

A key topic in the interview was the use of Assisted Evolution Technologies (TEA) to enhance vine resistance to diseases and adverse climate conditions. Lollobrigida explained that these technologies accelerate natural genetic selection processes without resorting to genetically modified organisms (GMOs). This approach can reduce pesticide use and make production more sustainable. Currently, these technologies are permitted in Italy and other European countries only in experimental settings, but the minister expressed hope for broader adoption to maintain European agriculture's competitiveness against other global regions.

The demographic challenge facing Italy, with an aging population and low birth rate, also came under discussion. This demographic trend impacts the availability of labor in agriculture. Lollobrigida proposed modernizing agriculture through advanced technologies and training immigrants to fill labor gaps, emphasizing the need to ensure fair working conditions and adequate training for these workers.

Regarding the wine market, Lollobrigida advocated for a focus on quality over quantity. He highlighted that Italy's most renowned wine regions, such as Veneto, Piedmont, and Tuscany, should serve as models for the rest of the country. He encouraged responsible consumption, urging consumers to prioritize quality in their wine choices.

Lollobrigida also emphasized the importance of attracting young people to agriculture, offering incentives like subsidized loans for land purchase and improving training in agricultural institutes. He believes that ensuring generational continuity in the countryside is essential for preserving both tradition and innovation in wine production.

Finally, the minister highlighted the role of enotourism in Italy, a country rich in cultural and natural heritage. Enotourism not only boosts the local economy but also helps preserve the cultural identity of wine-producing regions.

In summary, Francesco Lollobrigida presented a comprehensive and long-term vision for the future of wine in Italy, focusing on sustainability, technological innovation, and the preservation of quality and tradition amidst current global challenges. His insights reflect a deep commitment to safeguarding the unique legacy of Italian winemaking while adapting to the needs of the modern world.