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Crisis in Burgundy: Harvest Halved

BIVB President François Labet Voices Concerns Over Exceptionally Low Yields

Tuesday, December 3, 2024



The Burgundy wine region, renowned for its winemaking tradition and high-quality wines, faces a challenging scenario following the 2024 harvest, marked by significantly low production. François Labet, a winemaker in Vougeot and president of the Bureau Interprofessionnel des Vins de Bourgogne (BIVB), has indicated that this year's harvest could be even smaller than the notably scarce 2021 vintage. Preliminary estimates

suggest that Burgundy's overall yield is just half of its usual production, with significant disparities across subregions.

Chablis and the Auxerrois are among the most affected areas, reporting estimated drops of 70% and 50% respectively compared to an average harvest. In the Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune, pinot noir vineyards have experienced severe losses, while chardonnay vines in the Côte de Beaune were somewhat less affected, with reductions of around 25%. The Côte Chalonnaise and Mâconnais have managed to mitigate losses to a degree, though not without challenges.

The primary factor behind this drastic decrease is an unusually high pressure from downy mildew, a fungal disease that has been known in the region for decades but presented exceptionally unfavorable conditions this year. Laurent Delaunay, vice president of the BIVB and representative of the Édouard Delaunay trading house, emphasized that 2024 has been particularly difficult for winemakers who also faced extreme weather challenges.

Despite these hardships, there is some positive news. In the commercial sector, Burgundy saw a 3% increase in wine exports during the first half of 2024, even amid sluggish domestic consumption. This growth, achieved without price hikes, may signal market stabilization.

Domestically, data from large-scale retail in France for the first eight months of the year shows a similar trend, with price declines contributing to a moment of stabilization after years of continuous increases. However, this stability heavily relies on reserves from the 2022 and 2023 vintages. These stocks currently allow producers to maintain a stable supply but could prove insufficient if demand remains high and adverse weather conditions persist in future seasons.

Laurent Delaunay has warned that current reserves, covering only about four months of supply, might be rapidly depleted when the 2024 vintage enters the market in mid-2025. He expressed hope for more favorable weather conditions in 2025 to ensure sufficient production and stabilize both volumes and prices.

Burgundy, like many other wine regions, continues to grapple with the impacts of climate change and the economic crises it triggers. The industry's ability to adapt and overcome these challenges will be critical to maintaining its reputation and meeting global demand for its wines.