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CEEV Endorses EU Wine Sector Plans

CEEV Backs EU High-Level Group Recommendations for Wine Sector Evolution

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Participants in the 4th Meeting of the High Level Group on the future of Eu wine policy. (Credit: European Commission)

The *Comité Européen des Entreprises Vins* (CEEV) has expressed its support for the adoption of the policy recommendations proposed by the European Union's High-Level Group on the future of the wine sector. The group's most recent meeting took place on December 16 in Brussels, where representatives of the European Commission, member states, and the new Agriculture and Food Commissioner, Christophe Hansen, approved the guidelines. These recommendations aim to address the structural issues and transformations currently affecting the European wine industry.

Mauricio González-Gordon, president of the CEEV, welcomed the results of the discussions. He emphasized that the creation of the High-Level Group by the European Commission was a smart decision, underlining the need for proposals that tackle the sector's pressing challenges, such as the steady decline in wine consumption across Europe. González-Gordon stated that future policies should focus on market and consumer expectations, providing a regulatory framework that enables the sector to adapt and grow. While he acknowledged that not all problems can be solved through EU legislation, he stressed the importance of a supportive framework during these difficult times.

The CEEV highlighted three key principles present in the recommendations: competitiveness, sustainability, and resilience. European Union support, it said, should target operators investing in the sector and promoting innovation while avoiding counterproductive measures. The goal is to establish a sustainable wine production model that meets international market demands without compromising the economic viability of the industry.

The approved recommendations include several proposals advocated by the CEEV. Among them is the extension of the validity of replanting authorizations and exploring new strategies to manage production surpluses. Additionally, promoting green harvesting as an alternative to vineyard uprooting has been proposed, a measure that has previously sparked debate among producers.

Another key point is the call for greater flexibility in the financial management of wine sector programs. This would allow member states to tailor aid programs more effectively to producers' needs, optimizing available resources. Maintaining a strong export strategy is also a focus, along with strengthening wine promotion programs in international markets, which are viewed as critical to ensuring the competitiveness of European wines abroad.

Regarding climate change, the High-Level Group endorsed measures to help the sector adapt to new climatic conditions. These actions are seen as essential to building resilience in wine-producing regions facing challenges such as prolonged droughts or extreme temperature variations.

The recommendations also address the development of a specific regulatory framework for dealcoholized and partially dealcoholized wines. This segment, which has grown significantly in recent years, requires clear standards to ensure quality and facilitate its commercialization. Emerging areas such as wine tourism and distance selling were also discussed, as they present economic opportunities for producing regions.

The implementation of a harmonized electronic labeling system was another urgent topic of discussion. The CEEV supports a system based on QR codes that does not rely on language for comprehension. This mechanism would allow consumers to access detailed product information in a simple and efficient manner.

Ignacio Sánchez Recarte, secretary general of the CEEV, warned during the meeting about the need to maintain a fair environment for all operators in the sector. He expressed concerns about potential policies that distinguish between legal structures, such as private companies and cooperatives, arguing that such measures could disrupt market balance.

Sánchez Recarte also emphasized the importance of quickly translating these recommendations into a concrete legal framework. He stated that regulating electronic labeling and dealcoholized wines should be prioritized in the short term, as these are key areas for modernizing the sector.

Despite the progress made, the CEEV pointed to unresolved issues that still require EU attention. These include defining principles for sustainable grape and wine production, which the organization considers essential to meet consumer expectations and new environmental requirements.

Through these recommendations, the European wine sector seeks to position itself to effectively address the economic, environmental, and consumer challenges that will shape its development in the years to come.