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Italy's New Road Code Reduces Accidents but Hits Wine Market

Safety improvements lead to fewer road deaths, but wine producers face economic challenges as consumer habits shift.

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The recent changes to Italy's road code, championed by Minister Matteo Salvini, have led to unexpected consequences, particularly affecting the wine market. The new regulations have successfully reduced accidents by 2.8% compared to the previous year, with a significant 20.3% drop in fatal accidents and a 25.4% decrease in fatalities. Despite these positive safety outcomes, wine producers are facing challenges due to the new rules. Preliminary data from Polstrada and Carabinieri show a decrease in road

deaths from 67 to 50 in the last two weeks of 2024, a promising trend. However, this success in road safety contrasts with a decline in wine sales in bars, restaurants, and wineries. Although alcohol consumption accounts for less than 10% of total accidents, consumer habits have shifted noticeably.

Producers from the Roero region are among the most vocal critics of the economic impact of the decree. Local administrations in Roero, Cuneo, are urged to consider strategies to protect this already fragile sector, which is less known than the famous wines of nearby Langa. While responsible wine consumption is crucial, balancing road safety with the preservation of a local economy that is a regional enological gem is equally important.

On Saturday, March 15, a group of winemakers and local officials gathered at the Lago dei Salici restaurant to discuss the issue. The event, organized by the Vignaioli of Castellinaldo d'Alba, featured writer Giuseppe Cruciani, who presented his new book. During the meeting, a provocative question was raised: "Why aren't there tests for drugs, while those who drink two glasses of wine are criminalized? Equating wine with spirits is not fair," argued the local winemakers.