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Bordeaux Winegrowers Struggle as Oversupply and Falling Prices Threaten Industry Stability

Producers face mounting stockpiles, financial losses and stalled reforms amid declining demand and uncertain prospects for recovery

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In the Bordeaux region, many winegrowers are facing a crisis that threatens their livelihoods and the future of the local wine industry. Denis Roux, a 55-year-old grower in Fronsac, east of Bordeaux, has been working his family's ten hectares of vines for decades. After a difficult 2024, he says he has been forced to sell his wine at rock-bottom prices—sometimes as low as one euro per bottle, including bottling costs. This is far below his production cost of 1,500 euros per barrel, which he calls "a catastrophe." Roux says he has had to sell off stock just to stay afloat and now sees

little hope for the sector.

The problems in Bordeaux reflect broader trends across French wine regions. Wine consumption has declined in recent years, both domestically and abroad. Export markets have become more challenging, leading to overproduction and rising stock levels. Roux reports that he still has 700 hectoliters of unsold wine in his cellar—about two and a half years' worth of production. Bastien Mercier, spokesperson for the Viti33 growers' collective in Camiran, says his own cellar is full with 4,500 hectoliters and that he hasn't sold anything since January.

According to the Bordeaux Wine Council (CIVB), stock levels at the end of 2024 represented about 18 months of sales, including mandatory reserves for certain appellations. The CIVB acknowledges that this figure is rising as the market slows down. Dartess, a company specializing in wine logistics, plans to increase its storage capacity for bottled wines by up to 15% by 2026. The company is preparing for an influx of unsold 2024 vintage wines after disappointing early sales.

Laurent Rousseau, vice president of the labor court in Libourne and a grower himself near Saint-Emilion, confirms that many cellars are full and that more wineries are facing bankruptcy proceedings. He fears a collapse in prices as large volumes of cheap wine flood the market.

Efforts to stabilize prices have stalled. A new law intended to guarantee fair prices for farmers has been stuck in Parliament for over a year. Plans for a Bordeaux producers' organization to strengthen growers' bargaining power have yet to materialize. Despite two rounds of government-subsidized vine removal—which reduced Bordeaux's vineyard area from 103,000 hectares to under 90,000—the region's production capacity still exceeds what it can sell.

Jean-Samuel Eynard, president of the local agriculture chamber and a grower in Bourg-sur-Gironde, says growers are "completely disillusioned" as prices remain well below production costs. He estimates that current sale prices cover only half of what it costs to make the wine. Some unsold wine has been stored in tanks for years and is now deteriorating.

There is some hope that the 2025 vintage could bring relief. Early estimates from the Ministry of Agriculture suggest this year’s harvest will be smaller due to drought—about 3.6 million hectoliters, similar to last year—but potentially higher quality according to the CIVB. Eynard hopes this could send a positive signal to buyers and revive interest from traders and importers.

Michel-Eric Jacquin, newly elected president of the Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur appellations—which account for half the region’s output—says growers need to adapt if they want to survive. He suggests shifting some production from strict AOC (Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée) rules toward IGP (Indication Géographique Protégée) wines, which allow more flexibility in grape varieties and styles better suited to changing consumer tastes.

For now, many Bordeaux growers say they are running out of options as they wait for market conditions or policy changes that could help them recover from one of the toughest periods in recent memory.