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Champagne Growers Report High-Quality 2025 Harvest Amid Market Uncertainty

Producers face export challenges, new U.S. tariffs and domestic sales struggles despite favorable weather and strong grape yields

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The 2025 Champagne grape harvest has been described as high quality by local producers, but many growers remain deeply concerned about their future in the market. Maxime Toubart, president of the Syndicat Général des Vignerons (SGV), spoke to the press last week, highlighting both the positive results of this year's harvest and the challenges facing the industry.

According to Toubart, weather conditions during the growing season were remarkable, leading to healthy grapes and strong aromatic maturity. The harvest began early, starting on August 20 in the Aube region and finishing around September 10. This early timeline is becoming more common; since 2000, Champagne has seen seven harvests begin in August, a clear sign of changing climate patterns. Toubart noted that his own parents used to harvest in October.

The yield for 2025 is expected to fall between 9,000 and 10,000 kilograms per hectare. This meets the commercial target set by the industry in July, which was 9,000 kilograms per hectare. Champagne operates under a unique system in French viticulture, setting annual production goals based on sales forecasts. Since 2022, these targets have been reduced each year as part of a deliberate strategy to manage supply.

Despite the successful harvest, commercial prospects remain uncertain. The industry hopes for stable shipments compared to 2024, when exports dropped to 271.4 million bottles after three years at around 300 million. The French market accounts for 44% of Champagne sales but continues to struggle with low consumer confidence and declining purchasing power, according to SGV director general Estelle Thibault. Exports make up 56% of volume and 64% of value but face increasing challenges from protectionist policies and competition from other sparkling wines.

One major concern is a new U.S. tariff of 15% on European wines imposed on August 7. Toubart said negotiations are ongoing and expressed hope for a resolution. The industry is also looking at trade agreements with Mercosur countries and ongoing talks between the European Union and India as potential opportunities to expand market access through lower tariffs.

In the short term, Champagne producers are calling for stronger government support to help them reach customers more easily. They have long requested simplification of distance selling within the European Union. Currently, different excise duties in each country and requirements for buyers to handle customs paperwork themselves make it difficult for small producers to sell directly to consumers across borders. Toubart pointed out that it is often easier to ship a pallet of Champagne overseas than to send six bottles just across the border into Belgium.

Another request from growers is better access for small businesses to marketing support programs, which they say are currently geared toward larger companies. As Champagne faces both promising harvests and tough market conditions, producers are urging public authorities to help secure their place in global markets.