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Rhineland-Palatinate Reports Germany’s Lowest Alcohol Dependency Rate at 12.4% Amid Declining Wine Consumption

New €2 million campaign aims to boost German wine’s image as health warnings and imports challenge local producers’ market share

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German wine producers are facing a deep crisis as wine consumption continues to decline both globally and within Germany. In 2024, the average German over the age of 16 consumed only 22.2 liters of wine per year, a drop of 0.3 liters compared to the

previous year. Rising prices, inflation, and changing consumer habits such as the “Dry January” trend have contributed to this decrease. Additionally, recent public health campaigns warning against any alcohol consumption have unsettled consumers and negatively affected the image of wine.

The German Wine Institute (DWI), based in Bodenheim near Mainz, is preparing a new communications campaign aimed at improving the image of German wine and boosting sales. The campaign will focus on presenting wine as part of attractive lifestyle moments and responsible enjoyment. However, European Union regulations prohibit advertising that shows people enjoying wine in social settings, which has limited the creative options for such campaigns in recent years.

Rhineland-Palatinate’s Minister for Viticulture, Daniela Schmitt (FDP), announced at the Green Week in Berlin that the state will support the new campaign with €1 million. This funding will be provided jointly with regional wine marketing organizations from Rheinhessen, Pfalz, and Mosel. The federal Ministry of Agriculture will also contribute €1 million, as previously announced by Federal Agriculture Minister Alois Rainer (CSU). The DWI’s managing director Melanie Broyé-Engelkes said that combining resources from federal and state governments with their own budget would maximize the impact of the campaign.

The crisis in German wine is not only about falling sales but also about public perception. Recent statements by the German Nutrition Society, which adopted World Health Organization studies suggesting that even small amounts of alcohol can cause cancer, have led to increased skepticism about moderate wine consumption. Many scientists dispute these claims and point to studies showing health benefits from moderate wine drinking. Nevertheless, negative messages have spread widely.

Statistics from Barmer health insurance show that regions where wine is an important part of local culture—such as Rhineland-Palatinate, Hesse, and Baden-Württemberg—have some of the lowest rates of alcohol dependency in Germany. Rhineland-Palatinate has the lowest rate at 12.4%, compared to Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in the north with 23.1%. This suggests that cultural familiarity with wine may encourage more responsible consumption.

The new DWI campaign is scheduled to launch in the second quarter of 2026 and will target consumers outside traditional wine-growing regions, especially through supermarkets and retail outlets. A test campaign was already conducted in December 2025 in North Rhine-Westphalia’s grocery and specialty wine stores; its results are being used to refine the national rollout.

Minister Schmitt emphasized that less than half of all bottles sold in Germany contain domestic wine, with many consumers choosing imported wines instead. She called on consumers to support local producers by buying regional wines, highlighting their quality and value for money.

The campaign comes at a time when international trade agreements could open new markets for German wines. The recently signed MERCOSUR free trade agreement between the European Union and South American countries could reduce tariffs on German wines exported to Brazil and Argentina, where growing middle classes present new opportunities for sales.

On Thursday, members of the Bundestag’s Agriculture Committee are scheduled to visit the Rhineland-Palatinate stand at Green Week to discuss the current situation and future prospects for German wine producers. Minister Schmitt said it is important for federal policymakers to recognize both the economic and cultural significance of wine production in Germany.

The DWI hopes that its new marketing efforts will help reverse declining sales and restore confidence among consumers by promoting responsible enjoyment and emphasizing the cultural heritage of German wine.