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Chile Launches Project to Turn País Grape Skins Into Food and Drink Products

Initiative aims to boost small wine producers' incomes and cut waste by creating new markets for winemaking by-products.

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Chile is taking new steps to support small-scale wine producers by promoting non-alcoholic products made from País grape skins. On February 18, the Foundation for Agricultural Innovation (FIA) presented a project in the municipality of Nacimiento, located in the Biobío Region, that aims to produce juice, cookies, bread, and snacks enriched with País grape pomace. The initiative seeks to add value to local viticulture

and improve sustainability by using by-products from winemaking.

The project is being carried out by the Center for Agroindustrial Technological Development (CDTA) at the Faculty of Agricultural Engineering, University of Concepción, Chillán Campus. It is supported by FIA and will focus on developing at least four innovative products: non-alcoholic beverages and foods fortified with grape pomace. The goal is to create new market opportunities for small producers who have traditionally relied on bulk wine sales, which often bring low prices and generate significant solid waste.

Producers in Nacimiento face challenges such as reduced income from bulk wine and the environmental impact of winemaking waste. By exploring alternative uses for País grape skins, the project aims to strengthen economic, environmental, and social sustainability in the region. FIA Innovation Executive Bárbara Reyes said the consultancy will generate transferable knowledge, address new product lines, and build local capacities.

The launch event brought together local authorities and stakeholders from the wine sector. Attendees included Dr. Johannes de Bruijn, coordinator of the consultancy and academic director of CDTA; Jaime Ramírez, regional representative of FIA; and Carlos Toloza, mayor of Nacimiento. Dr. de Bruijn emphasized that the project brings visibility to the difficulties faced by small País grape producers in southern Chile and offers a path toward higher-value products.

The first stage of the project will involve a production assessment of vineyards and wineries in Nacimiento. Winemaker Roberto Henríquez will lead this phase, providing recommendations to improve both wine quality and raw material use. The second stage will focus on commercial prospecting and sensory analysis led by agro-industrial engineer Mauricio Tapia. This phase will evaluate how well consumers accept the new products.

The University of Concepción’s Faculty of Agricultural Engineering will coordinate all activities through CDTA. The team will develop preliminary versions of each product, validate them through sensory panel surveys, and share results with local producers and stakeholders. The project’s activities are scheduled to take place between

December 2025 and August 2026.

By turning winemaking by-products into marketable goods like juice, cookies, bread, and snacks, Chile hopes to boost incomes for small-scale growers while reducing waste. The initiative reflects a broader trend in global agriculture toward circular economy practices that maximize resource use and minimize environmental impact. If successful, it could serve as a model for other wine-producing regions facing similar challenges.