vinetur

French Wine Consumption Plummets as Younger Generations Turn Away from Tradition

Industry faces shrinking vineyards, declining exports, and a demographic crisis threatening the future of French winemaking.

Thursday, February 26, 2026



French wine is facing a period of deep uncertainty, as new data shows a sharp decline in both consumption and interest among younger generations. According to figures released during the Salon International de l’Agriculture in Paris, wine consumption in France has dropped from 100 liters per person in 1960 to just 33 liters projected for 2025. This represents a reduction to one-third of previous volumes. The average yield per hectare has also fallen, from 59 hectoliters in the early 2000s to 54 hectoliters between 2020 and 2024. The total area of vineyards in production has decreased from 787,000 hectares in 2009 to 744,000 hectares in 2024.

These numbers highlight the challenges facing the French wine industry, which has been struggling with reforms, financial aid packages, and ongoing vineyard removals. At the same time, both domestic consumption and exports are declining. The French Minister of Agriculture, Annie Genevard, presented these findings at the agriculture fair as part of a national review on food sovereignty. The European Commissioner for Agriculture, Christophe Hansen, also announced that France will receive €40 million from the EU’s crisis reserve to help distill surplus red and rosé wines—over 1.2 million hectoliters—to address falling prices and overstocked cellars.

FranceAgriMer coordinated seven multisectoral working groups to address these issues, including one focused on viticulture and cider production. More than 250 professionals participated over several weeks to identify ways to revive production and transformation, assess necessary conditions for recovery, and set realistic ten-year goals. The report on French wine was prepared by the “Vitivicole et Cidricole” group led by Bernard Angelras. It notes that while wine remains a powerful symbol of French culture and a key pillar of the agri-food sector—with a trade surplus of €15.6 billion for wines and spirits in 2024—consumption has been steadily declining for decades.

Until the late 2010s, this drop was offset by strong international exports. In recent years, however, export growth has slowed. The sector now faces economic challenges on top of health and environmental crises that require major structural adjustments. Viticulture accounts for 18% of French agricultural income but only covers 3% of farmland. Over the past five years, average annual wine production reached 47.2 million hectoliters: 70% still wines, 8% sparkling wines, and 22% grape spirits. This reflects lower productivity compared to previous decades.

French vineyards are increasingly affected by severe weather events such as frost, droughts, hailstorms, and heatwaves. Beyond environmental risks, there is an economic imbalance between supply and demand. A major factor is changing consumption habits among young people who are moving away from wine. Behavioral studies point to several reasons: a break in passing down wine knowledge and culture; changes in meal structure; more dynamic lifestyles; and a mismatch between young consumers' tastes and what the market offers—especially with red wines.

Internationally, trade disputes have caused instability and reduced export volumes. This has led to structural oversupply and slower commercial activity that is weakening many producers and sellers.

The demographic challenge is also significant. Bringing young people into winemaking is essential for maintaining production and regional vitality. However, between 2022 and 2024 there was a net loss of about 50 new winemakers under age 40 in France. New vineyard areas are shrinking due to climate risks in regions like Aude, Hérault, and Pyrénées-Orientales. In 2024 alone, about 2,700 winemakers left the business while only 1,328 new farmers entered—825 of them under age 40. For every retiree, only about 0.3 young people take their place.

Long-term profitability for these new businesses is crucial. The retention rate for young winemakers after six years was 86% in 2024—a solid figure but lower than those entering mixed livestock or crop-livestock farming.

Looking ahead ten years, a study conducted in France in 2023 predicts that wine consumption will fall by another 5-6 million hectoliters by 2035 if current trends continue and no action is taken to attract younger drinkers. Consumption among those over age 65 is four times higher than among those under age 35.

Globally, similar declines are seen in countries like the United States, Spain, and Italy. Experts say France must adopt more aggressive strategies both at home and abroad to stabilize its wine sector amid these shifting patterns in taste and demographics.