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Characterising innovations and sustainability in wine firms. An exploratory study of French wine industry

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OCTOBER 11-12-13, 2022 MONTPELLIER

MONTPELLIER VINE & WINE SCIENCES INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

Sharing Knowledge & Designing Research
Programs to Address Key Challenges
Of the Vine-Wine Sector



SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS

Table of contents

INTRODUCTION	5
CONFERENCES	6
Climate Change: adaptation and mitigation	7
A global overview on adaptive strategy to climate change of the wine industry	8
Characterization of genomic diversity in Vitis.....	9
Genetic diversity of the local criolla germplasm and adaptation strategies to a changing environment in Chile	10
Temperature dynamics and impact on cold hardiness, deacclimation, and budbreak phenology ..	11
Breeding of drought tolerant cultivars.....	12
Integrated grape-to-wine studies to evaluate adaptation and resilience of grapevine scion / rootstocks to water limitation.....	13
Reduction of inputs	14
Microbiological approaches to reduce bentonite requirements.....	15
How to cultivate grape without pesticide, the VITAE project.....	16
Developing a satellite image-based sampling protocol for leaf blade nutrient monitoring in vineyards	17
Tools to discover resistance phenotypes and haplotypes in diverse germplasm.....	18
Reducing inputs, adapting to climate change and supporting the agro-ecological transition of grapevine systems through biodiversity management.....	19
Building quality.....	20
Building authenticity in the wine sector: a narrative analysis of newcomers' stories.....	21
Varietal thiols: from vine to wine.....	22
Enzyme treatment enhances astringency through decreasing polysaccharide and increasing polyphenolic content in Cabernet Sauvignon wines.....	23
Interplay of water deficit and grape berry chemical composition.....	24
Metabolic QTL analysis for characterisation of the genetic potential of grapevine flavour formation	25
Phenolic compounds, from grape to wine	26
Biodiversity, microbiomes and ecosystems	27
Conserving biodiversity and ecosystem services in vineyards through agroecology	28
Microbial interactions between grapevine pathogens and the leaf microbiome.....	29
Microbial flux from grape to wine.....	30
Effects of regenerative management on vineyard soil biodiversity and climate change mitigation	31
Inter-row cover crop applications and their influence in the soil microbiome	32
Ecological patterns and molecular signatures in fermentation ecosystems.....	33

POSTERS	34
New plant biopolymers for the colloidal stability of the coloring matter of red wines.....	35
Selected Ion Flow Tube Mass Spectrometry: a promising technology for the high throughput phenotyping of grape berry volatilome	36
Impact of VvTPS24 genetics on farnesyl pyrophosphate bonding and production of α -guaiene, the rotundone direct precursor.....	37
The impact of <i>Saccharomyces</i> yeasts on wine varietal aroma, wine aging and wine longevity.....	38
Soil and climate zoning determining grapevine resource yield-gaps in Languedoc-Roussillon vineyards	39
Investigating the conceptualization and practices linked to peppery notes in Syrah red wines by French winemakers from different regions	40
Impact of different commercial <i>Saccharomyces cerevisiae</i> strains in Savatiano wines harvested at two ripening stages	41
Volatile and phenolic composition of Agiorgitiko wines from fifteen different regions of PDO Nemea zone.....	42
Exploring the microbiota of resistant varieties in organic farming.....	43
Diffusion of phenolic compounds during a model maceration in winemaking: role of skins, flesh, and seeds.....	44
Characterising innovations and sustainability in wine firms. An exploratory study of French wine industry.....	45
LiDAR, a tool to inform sists-specific spraying: Application in a New York Concord grape production area.....	46
New glutathionylated precursors of polyfunctional thiols in grapes: focus on Chardonnay and white interspecific cultivars grown in Belgium	47
Potential of N-CovSel for variable selection: a case study on time-series of multispectral images .	48
PARTICIPANTS.....	49

INTRODUCTION

In cooperation with scientists from USA (University of California Davis, Cornell University), South Africa (Stellenbosch University) and Chile (Universidad de Chile, INIA La Platina), the Key Initiative (KIM) **Montpellier Vine & Wine Sciences**, supported by the University of Montpellier, and its partners INRAE and Institut Agro Montpellier, organized a 3-days scientific seminar on the campus Institut Agro-INRAE of Montpellier in October 2022.

This event, which follows the remote seminar organized in June 2021, brought together involved world-class scientific speakers from local and international institutions with the aim of sharing knowledge to design cooperative research programs tackling some of the current challenges of the wine industry.

One hundred and twenty scientists and staffs from fourteen countries participated in conferences and workshops, organized around four key topics:

- Adaptation and mitigation of climate change issues;
- Reduction of chemical inputs;
- Building wine quality;
- Biodiversity, microbiomes and ecosystems.

Several initiatives were formalized to combine international expertise and construct international research partnerships.

CONFERENCES

Climate Change: adaptation and mitigation

Characterising innovations and sustainability in wine firms. An exploratory study of French wine industry.

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Objective

The objective of this study is to understand how the characteristics of the different types of firms, i.e. wine estates, wine cooperatives and wine merchants, and their forms of governance, can influence innovations and sustainability decisions in the wine industry.

This study has been run as part of the action plan of the Chaire Inq'Faaqt (Innovating in Agricultural and Agrifood chains, Quality and Territories), and more particularly the Axis 4 "firms and jobs".

Methods

Our methodology is qualitative and based on semi-structured interviews with the three main types of French wine firms: wine estates, wine cooperatives and wine merchants. A total of 16 businesses, located in Occitanie, Provence and Alsace, were interviewed. These interviews were quasi totally recorded and transcribed. These firms have very different production orientation, size and strategies.

In this poster, as a first exploratory step, we analyzed in deep one of each type of firms. This will allow us to perform a subsequent analysis of the full sample.

Results

We observed that process-related innovations were the most frequent, followed by organizational ones, related to governance. Marketing and logistic innovations were more frequent in the biggest and more decentralized firms (wine co-op and wine merchant). Also, sustainability-related innovations were very contrasted from a firm to another, the wine estate showing a more balanced sustainability strategy on the economic, environmental and social pillars.

Standards seem to be the most spread means to signal sustainability, especially for the wine co-op. The sustainability performance is not easy to measure because of its complexity. Firms preferred to implement more flexible voluntary commitment strategies (partnerships with stakeholders, returnable or recycling bottles systems, among others).

Conclusion

This exploratory study underlined the great diversity of the wine firms in terms of types of innovations and sustainability orientation. It is difficult to design a typology of wine firms, but it is now possible to have a more detailed idea about the main concerns, as water management, pesticides shortening or the relevance of organic wines.