

Communiqué on Conference “Viticulture.Future.Danube Region - The effects of climate change on viticulture and wine tourism”

4. November 2018

Introduction

On 4 November 2018, high-ranking delegations from Bulgaria, Austria, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary accepted the invitation of the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Rural Regions and Consumer Protection (MLR) and the Deutsche Weinbauverband e.V. (DWV – German Winegrowers' Association) to discuss their experiences regarding the effects of climate change on viticulture and wine tourism.

First results

Those taking part in the conference looked at the effects of climate change on the whole process of producing wine, including marketing and wine tourism. They share the view that wine-growers in the Danube region are faced with similar challenges as far as the increase in temperature is concerned. This means it makes sense for wine-growing countries to share experiences more often and to work together on finding solutions. They agree that the consequences of climate change are showing similar trends across the Danube region, but the extent of the manifestations of it (e.g. extreme weather) may vary from place to place.

Participants have agreed on a procedure to increase cooperation between all the countries in the Danube region. This includes a pledge for professional organisations and government ministries to exchange ideas on a regular basis.

The first results of the questionnaire, and reports from the wine-growing countries show that serious consequences for vine cultivation can be detected, in particular due to phenological changes, extreme weather events and new harmful organisms. The options available for risk management were also discussed, e.g. protection against erosion, cloud seeding, protection against late frosts and new plant diseases, irrigation, new grape types, new breeding systems for vines, etc. Beyond these obvious consequences however, there are fundamental questions regarding the soils in the vineyards and the function they will have in the future, how they will warm, the impact this will have on greenhouse gases and the protection or lack of protection they will provide against the formation of groundwater, something which has previously been significantly overlooked and can be dealt with where necessary.

As well as this, participants from all wine-producing countries reported on the impacts on wine production. The changes in terms of alcohol content, acidity, extracts and phenol structure represent new challenges to wine production when it comes to being

able to offer consumers the types of wine they are used to. Therefore, the consequences on marketing wine and wine tourism were also discussed, which however will need to be investigated in more detail.

Further procedures

Those in attendance at the conference see it as necessary for wine-growers to develop and implement an individualised and customised risk management system. The different private-sector and government bodies should be coordinated and developed further through cooperation between professional organisations and ministries in the wine-producing countries in the Danube region.

This includes, among other things:

- Reviewing the funding policy and the conditions of funding for preventative measures for wine-growing companies against weather-related risks in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
- Monitoring the support for comprehensive risk cover through multi-risk insurance, or a mutual fund against weather-related risks
- Encouraging and communicating best-practice concepts
- Communication with scientists
- Increasing research activity in the areas of
 - Combating new causes of damage
 - Water-efficient wine-growing techniques
 - Irrigation techniques
 - Breeding resistant plants
 - Enology
- Exchanging experience regarding the efficiency of the instruments used in risk management
- Establishing a programme for educating and training winemakers

Significance of wine-growing in the countries in the Danube region

The conference participants underlined the significance of wine-growing in the countries in the Danube region and the necessity of organising a successful risk management system to avoid significant economic losses. This is because wine-growing is linked with a number of other sectors of the economy (gastronomy, tourism, crafts, machine industry etc). (If necessary, explore an issue in greater depth and refer to statistics).

This is because wine-growing is linked with a number of other sectors of the economy (gastronomy, tourism, crafts, machine industry etc) and often serves as a basis of regional identity.