



European Organic Wineries are Pulling Together

On the eve of the ProWein wine trade fair in Düsseldorf, a joint presentation of the Demeter, Ecovin, Haut les Vins, and respekt-BIODYN winemakers' associations took place for the first time. In a friendly exchange for the sustainable future of the European wine landscape.

Duesseldorf, 20 March 2018

According to Bio Austria, just under 9 percent of the 3.3 million hectares of vineyards in the European Union were cultivated organically in 2016, and the trend is rising. Leading the charge and driving this trend are the Demeter, Haut les Vins, and respekt-BIODYN transnational winemakers' associations, as well as the German association Ecovin, who presented themselves together for the first time in Germany under the motto "Europe's organic & biodynamic winemakers – sustainably successful". "We want to offer ecologically-oriented wineries a stage, because they do priceless work for the European winemaking landscape, and at the same time produce wines of the highest quality," says organizer Christian Frens of Sommelier-Consult.

Around 500 wine enthusiasts came to the Düsseldorf Industry Club to taste wines from more than 80 exhibitors from Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Austria. "We all want the same thing: to keep our vineyards healthy for our descendants, and at the same time to produce excellent, individual wines. In addition, we are operating in line with the targets of the Paris Agreement on climate change, because the higher the biodiversity in our vineyards, and the larger their area, the better they act as CO₂ sinks. We need as many wineries as possible to do the same," adds Michael Goëss-Enzenberg, chairman of respekt-BIODYN, and one of the event's initiators. Whether or not the event will be repeated next year will be decided in the coming weeks. In the positive case, it will again take place again on the Saturday before ProWein. "We want to use this synergy. Winemakers, attendees, and the press only have to travel once and can therefore save important resources," explains Christian Frens. A listing of all the wineries can be found at bio-biodyn.sommelier-consult.de

THE ASSOCIATIONS IN DETAIL

Demeter e. V. Demeter is the oldest organic farming association in Germany. Demeter members have been cultivating their fields biodynamically since 1924. Due to its living circular economy, this is regarded as the most sustainable form of land management, based on Rudolf Steiner's ideas and going far beyond the requirements of EU ecological regulations.

Under the umbrella of Demeter International, Demeter members have joined forces to form a worldwide community. As an international organic brand, Demeter is represented on all continents. The Demeter Academy and four independent training courses offer a wide range of basic and advanced training in biodynamic operations. Approximately 800 certified (or in the process of conversion) wineries around the world cultivate around 10,000 hectares of vineyards, 8,500 hectares of which are in the EU. Germany has 54 Demeter holdings with 218 hectares, Austria 60 with 410 hectares, Switzerland 21 holdings with 215 hectares, France 222 with 4,706 hectares, and Italy 39 with 1,303 hectares. www.demeter.de

Ecovin. Ecovin was founded in 1985, and is the largest German association of ecologically operating wineries. Its members identify with biodiversity, respect for nature, meaningfulness, and aesthetics. Today, after more than a quarter of a century of committed work on the political and viticultural levels, Ecovin has 233 member operations and currently cultivates around 2,356 hectares of vineyards, accounting for a quarter of all German organic vineyards (as of January 2018).

Ecovin, with its comprehensive training and further education program, and its contribution to international guidelines, is regarded as *the* professional association for organic viticulture, especially since it began close cooperation with Demeter of Germany in this regard. Double membership in both associations is the logical extension of this. www.ecovin.de

Haut les Vins. Haut les Vins started as a group of french friends, all artisan growers who shared a passion for terroir-driven wines, but had different views, experience, and philosophies. Most of them were and still remain members of other groups organized around farming or winemaking practices, but they believed in confrontation between differing opinions as a powerful lever of improvement. Today the group consists of 65 members, 6 of them not yet certified, cultivating 780 hectares of vineyards in total in five countries.



For Haut les Vins members, arguing about sulfur, filtration, herbicides, plowing, or cover crops while sharing food and wine over dinner is as important as running a tasting session. Yes, they often disagree on many topics.

As a result, the vast majority of the members have moved to better practices, both in the vineyard and in the cellar, over the years. Haut les Vins was conceived as a crossroads where growers and consumers are exposed to diversity, and can listen to and understand different ways of thinking and acting. The members share the idea that integrity must be valued, but should never lead to fundamentalism. Terroir conservation and expression are, and will always remain, the ideal. www.hautlesvins.com

respekt-BIODYN. respekt-BIODYN is a biodynamic association with the aim of producing outstanding wines with the greatest possible individuality. At present, 22 internationally renowned winemakers from Austria, Germany, Italy, and Hungary are members. They cultivate a total vineyard area of around 718 hectares, and their working method is a biodynamic circular economy according to the ideas of Rudolf Steiner. Each member is the winemaker as a person; in addition to the winemaking methods, the quality of the wines and humans involved are criteria for acceptance. The association, founded in 2007, is based in Austria and its formation was preceded by an intensive training phase with Dr. Andrew Lorand, an agricultural ecologist and pioneer of biodynamics. In 2015 and 2016, five prestigious VDP wineries joined the group: Busch, Christmann, Ökonomierat Rebholz, Dr. Wehrheim and Wittmann.

In 2016, the strict respekt guidelines, containing aspects of modern agroecology and social, ecological, and economic sustainability, were revised. They can be viewed on the association's website, and will be monitored by independent European inspection bodies. They go far beyond EU organic regulations. This revision focused on the highest individuality for respekt members and wine styles within the framework of biodynamics. The respekt training program is open to all winemakers and wine experts in the sense of a "Partnership for the Goals". www.respekt-biodyn.bio/en/community.html



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