

MEMO on Organic Wine rules - Frequently Asked Questions

- What does "organic" mean?

"Organic" farming relates to agricultural production systems that seek to provide the consumer with fresh, tasty and authentic food while respecting natural life-cycle systems. Typical organic practices include: strict limits on chemical pesticides and fertilisers, appropriate livestock farming practices (e.g. free range or open air systems, primarily organic feed), a strict ban on the use of Genetically-Modified Organisms, limits on processing aids and food additives.

- What share of EU agriculture production is organic?

In 2009, organic area in the EU-27 was 8.6 million hectares - 4.7% of the total utilised agricultural area. The share is over 10% in Austria, Sweden, Lithuania and the Czech Republic. Figures for 2008, show that there were 190 700 organic holdings - roughly 1.5% of all holdings.

- What share of EU grape production is organic?

In 2010, the overall organic grape production area was estimated at more than 75 000 ha, relative to a total wine area of nearly 3.5 million ha. The biggest organic grape areas were noted in Italy (30 341 ha), followed by France (21 403 ha) and Spain (17 665 ha).

Area of organic grape production (in hectares)

	BG	CZ	EL	ES	FR	IT	HU
<i>2008</i>	154	18	3 135	13 909	15 419	29 532	527
<i>2010</i>	460	201	3 875	17 665	21 403	30 341	533
	NL	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	UK
<i>2008</i>	20	5		126	53	53	52
<i>2010</i>	40	84	632*	604	150	50	93

*Source: Eurostat; There is also production in AT, DE, BE, LU, CY, MT, DK, but not reliable figures are available for 2008 or 2010; * 2004 figure;*

- Do we not already have rules for organic wine?

No, the only EU-wide rules at present are for "wine from organic grapes"

- Why do we need to harmonise these rules at EU level? What would happen if we don't have EU-wide rules?

Wine is explicitly covered by the scope of the organic farming legislation, and the Commission had previously signalled its intention to introduce EU-wide rules for organic wine production. The continued absence of harmonized EU rules might have caused a legal vacuum – and might therefore have risked the introduction of [temporary] national rules and potentially caused legal and commercial confusion.

- **What will happen for “wine produced from organic grapes”?**

Under EC regulation 344/2011, transitional rules prolong the current labelling rules for “wine made of organic grapes” for the 2011 and 2012 grape harvests. However, the EU organic logo cannot be used on such wines since there is no harmonization of the entire production process “from grape to wine”. The use of private organic logos is also allowed.

- **What will be the rules for wine produced outside the EU? Will they have to respect our norms?**

Organic products are imported into the EU under the equivalency rules, meaning that they have been produced according to a standard equivalent to the EU one and that they have been controlled under a control system of equivalent effectiveness. Equivalence is defined in Codex Guidelines as the capability of different inspection and certification systems to meet the same objectives.

- **The Organic logo was introduced in July 2010 with a 2-year transition period. What will no longer be possible after July 2012?**

From July 2012, all organic products in the EU must bear the EU logo in order to be marketed as “organic”. The transition period was only to take account of old labels. However, there is no problem for the EU logo to co-exist with national or private organic labels.

- **What CAP subsidies are available for organic wine production?**

There are no specific subsidies available for organic wine production, but under Rural Development programmes Member States provide support measures under agri-environment schemes as area payments for organic farming. There are also other Rural Development options open to Member States, varying from organic-specific measures such as for individual farmers who want to convert to organic production (to help cover the additional costs in the period of conversion), but also other schemes which tend in practice to help organic producers, such as training programmes, investment opportunities, information and promotion measures, and food quality schemes.

For more details, see http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/home_en