

## The Loire Valley Vision and Progress on Eco-Friendly Farming

**New York City, NY, November 18, 2021** – As the effects of climate change become increasingly more dramatic, agricultural sectors around the globe are shifting towards environmentally conscious practices – and viticulture-focused enterprises are no exception. In the realm of eco-friendly farming and vinification, the Loire Valley continues to be one of France’s most progressive and forward-thinking regions.

According to the Economy and Studies Department at Loire Valley Wines Council, almost half of the region estates and vineyards are engaged in an environmental or organic farming approach. About a quarter of them are certified organic or are in conversion towards it. The Loire Valley Wines Council points out that the evolution towards organic farming started at the beginning of the previous decade and became more pronounced starting in 2015. Eco-friendly farming continues to grow in the Loire Valley, with a +33% increase in organic lands between 2018 and 2020. Loire Valley Wines Council cites several reasons for the transitions, including protection of biodiversity, consumer demand, value of wines, and overarching desire to limit impact on the land.

### Respect That Goes Beyond the Vines

For many Loire Valley winemakers, the choice to farm with eco-friendly or organic practices is rooted in more than just simply caring for vines. Such is the case for Vincent Nivet, winemaker at Domaine du Coudray on the Quincy appellation and spokesperson for Bio Centre Loire, a cooperative of 100% organic producers. *“The organic way of production is an integral part of my job. It goes from respecting my soils, the water, and the air, to my personal life and my consumption habits,”* he says, additionally citing a strong reverence for the people who work in the vineyards with him. *“Giving them the healthiest possible work environment [helps] to preserve their health,”* he explains. Nivet’s vineyards have been farmed organically since 2006.

However, eco-friendly and organic farming doesn’t always come easy. Nivet notes that learning to control the vigor of vines is just one of many challenges, as well as understanding that organic fertilizers can respond much slower than conventional ones. *“The process does not become easier as the years go by,”* he reveals. *“It is a demanding model that does not tolerate the slightest error, to which we must add the increasingly frequent climatic hazards (spring frosts, hail, heavy rainfall) that [are associated] with global warming.”* Nivet also notes that organically farmed vineyards also frequently produce lower yields than conventionally farmed vines, though thankfully, the number of new conversions to organic / biodynamic / HEV methods is consistently increasing in the Loire Valley.



### The Search for an Ever-Better Quality

The question remains – do eco-friendly wines taste different than conventionally made bottles? The answer is not that simple. *“Organic wine is not clear to the nose or to the taste, as there is no organic wine taste,”* says Pierre-Jean Sauvion, Oenologist at Lacheteau. He explains that pesticides can’t be tasted in the wine, as the dosages are too low to detect



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them. But when high-quality fruit and little to no manipulation is used in the cellar, a better quality (and therefore, better tasting wine) will most likely be the result.

Sauvion notes that from a risk-taking and cost point of view, specifically correlated with the high maintenance and amount of time needed to farm organically (as well as the possible decrease in yields), a higher price for organically farmed wine is indeed justified. *“The Loire Valley region is an extremely complex region for organic wine production because of the climate. You must be an extremely good technician to make organic wines in the Loire Valley, and this every year.”* Therefore for Sauvion, the conversation should move beyond organics. *“I think we need to raise the debate on sustainable production more than organic or non-organic, which is a very dividing message,”* he says, suggesting that the world should also consider the overall carbon footprint of a given wine.



## The Future of Eco-Friendly Wines in the Loire Valley

The great dynamics of the Loire Valley and the strong involvement and beliefs of producers in ecofriendly agriculture is visible. *“The number of new conversions to organic/biodynamic/HEV methods is constantly increasing in the Loire Valley, which is a sign of the enthusiasm for this production method,”* says Nivet. *“It is true that it requires more manual work in the vineyards (and more constraints in the interventions), but these modes of production are most often well accepted by the wine world now.”*



Indeed, consumer habits continue to move in the same direction. In February 2021, the Wine Intelligence - US SOLA (SOLA stands for Sustainable, Organic, Lower-alcohol, and Alternative wine) conducted a survey entitled “Opportunities for Sustainable and Organic Wine in the US.” This series of research found that concerns around climate change and a switch to sustainable, vegetarian, and vegan products was highest among Gen Z and Millennial consumers. These types of products are often linked with an association of higher quality, and said drinkers are willing to pay more for wines produced using eco-friendly methods.

By 2025, France’s National Wine Sector expects that 50% of vineyards will boast some form of certification for eco-friendly or organic farming. The Economy and Studies Department at Loire Valley Wines notes that the Loire Valley is just around the corner from reaching this national objective statistic for their region alone and will likely reach it by the end of 2021. The Loire Valley Wines Council reveals the objective of the Loire Valley Wine Sector Plan is to have 100% of the vineyards committed to environmental certification or organic farming by 2030. In 2020, Loire Valley vineyards were already at 47% of the 2030 objective.

The trend is clear. Supply and demand of Loire Valley Wines are coming together for a more responsible and committed viticulture. One can predict that this statement will only continue to be more and more validated.





### **About Loire Valley Wines**

The Loire Valley, referred to as the Garden of France, is known for its magnificent chateaux, rich history and 5 distinct wine regions - Pays Nantais, Anjou, Saumur, Touraine, Centre-Loire – each with its own characteristics of grapes, appellations and styles. The wine-growing regions dotting the Loire's banks feature more than 4,000 wineries, 140,000 acres of vineyards, 51 appellations of origin and 6 protected geographical indication, thus making the Loire Valley the third largest French winemaking region. Producing 325 million bottles per year – be they red, rosé or white; still or sparkling; dry or semi-dry, supple or sweet – the Loire Valley is France's leading producer of white wines and ranks second for rosés. The US is the Loire Valley's #1 export market both in value (\$110 million) and volume (110,000 barrels).

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