

Accord vin UE-USA : publication au Journal officiel de l'UE

La décision du Conseil du 14 novembre 2005 concernant la conclusion d'un accord sous forme d'échange de lettres entre la Communauté européenne et les États-Unis d'Amérique sur des questions concernant le commerce du vin, et le contenu de cet accord, la lettre de la Communauté et celle des États-Unis, ont fait l'objet d'une publication au Journal officiel de l'Union européenne du 18 novembre 2005.

Nouvelle baisse des exportations de vins en septembre

L'excédent des échanges agroalimentaires français s'élève à 776 millions d'euros en septembre 2005, cédant 154 millions d'euros par rapport à septembre 2004. Cette baisse est imputable aux produits agricoles transformés comme aux produits agricoles bruts. Elle se concentre pour les deux tiers sur les pays tiers. Globalement, les exportations agroalimentaires (3 409 millions d'euros) perdent 4 % alors que les importations (2 633 millions d'euros) gagnent 1 %. Les ventes de vins qui s'étaient redressées en août s'inscrivent de nouveau en baisse, essentiellement à destination du Japon, des États-Unis et du Canada. La valeur des exportations de vins et champagne en septembre s'élève à 574 millions d'euros, soit 17 millions de moins qu'en septembre 2004. Celle d'eaux-de-vie et alcools, à 234 millions, progresse pour sa part très légèrement (+ 2 millions). Sur neuf mois, les exportations de vins et champagne cèdent plus de 150 millions à 3,745 milliards d'euros, alors que celles d'eaux-de-vie et spiritueux s'accroissent de 75 millions à 1,603 milliard d'euros.

Arrachage et restructuration du vignoble pour la campagne 2005-2006

Le conseil de direction de l'ONIVINS du 16 novembre a approuvé le projet d'arrêté relatif à la prime d'abandon définitif de superficies viticoles pour la campagne 2005-2006. Celui-ci a été complété des dernières demandes, notamment l'ouverture de la mesure dans le département de l'Hérault. Le projet d'arrêté relatif à la restructuration pour la campagne 2005/2006 a par ailleurs fait l'objet d'un vote défavorable par les membres professionnels du conseil. La baisse du taux de l'aide proposée pour répondre au risque de dépassement de l'enveloppe financière allouée au niveau européen a été jugée inacceptable, des discussions auront lieu au niveau du cabinet du ministre. La souscription à la distillation alcool de bouche pour la campagne 2005/2006 devrait s'intensifier dans un objectif de dégagement des volumes excédentaires de vins de table issus de la récolte 2004. Le conseil a également fait un point sur le suivi des travaux concernant la réforme de l'OCM vin. La position française concernant la demande d'une OCM spécifique avec des mesures non découplées a été réaffirmée conjointement par les pouvoirs publics et les professionnels.

ONIVINS : budget 2006

Le budget de l'ONIVINS pour 2006, présenté dans un cadre rénové du fait de l'entrée en application de la LOLF, a été approuvé lors du dernier Conseil de direction. Les membres professionnels du Conseil n'ont pas pris part au vote. Le budget d'intervention est en quasi-reconduction avec une baisse prévue des dépenses de l'ordre de 3 %. Le budget prévisionnel concernant les dépenses communautaires est en très sensible augmentation du fait de l'ouverture dans plusieurs régions de la prime à l'abandon définitif et du maintien d'un fort niveau de distillation. En début de Conseil, le personnel de l'office s'est exprimé par la voix de ses représentants syndicaux pour faire part de son inquiétude concernant la baisse des effectifs du fait de la réforme des offices.

GB : des résultats très positifs pour Majestic Wine

Majestic Wine, première chaîne de magasins spécialisés de type entrepôt en Grande-Bretagne, annonce une augmentation de 18% de son bénéfice pour les six mois avant fin septembre 2005. La valeur des ventes s'est élevée à environ 119 millions d'€, progressant ainsi de 5,5%. Le prix moyen des vins vendus s'établit désormais à 8 € la bouteille, pour une valeur moyenne par transaction de 169 € contre 162 € en 2004. Majestic note par ailleurs que les vins commercialisés autour de 25 € ont fait un bond de 43%, une progression qui a largement bénéficié aux vins fins français. En revanche, les activités françaises de l'enseigne (-4,3%) ont souffert d'une baisse continue du nombre de voyageurs britanniques souhaitant profiter du différentiel fiscal entre la France et la Grande-Bretagne sur les boissons alcoolisées.

Primeurs : l'effet Beaujolais

Le Beaujolais reste le symbole des vins primeurs, mais d'autres profitent de la publicité pour ce vin connu dans le monde entier, à l'image du Gaillac dans le Sud-Ouest. A base de Gamay, cépage privilégié des vins nouveaux, le Gaillac représente environ 1 million de bouteilles vendues par an. Pour le Touraine primeur, 8 000 hectolitres ont été produits cette année, soit environ 600 000 bouteilles. Mais la production est en baisse depuis trois ans.

Des enchères prometteuses

La 145ème édition de la vente aux enchères des Hospices de Beaune, ce week-end, soulève l'espoir d'enchères en hausse. En 2004 le montant global des ventes s'était élevé à 3,02 millions d'€, un chiffre en net recul sur celui de 2003 (-29,18%). Cette année la collaboration inédite de la maison de ventes Christie's, devrait attirer davantage les particuliers et les acheteurs internationaux. Tout un chacun pourra désormais enchérir, alors qu'auparavant seuls les négociants-éleveurs en avaient le droit. Samedi se tiendra, également pour la première fois, une vacation de vins en bouteilles provenant de la réserve personnelle des Hospices.

Après-midi technique dans la Vallée du Rhône

Le 22 novembre, le président d'Inter Rhône convie les professionnels du vin dans le Gard afin de passer une après-midi technique sur le thème : « Diversité de l'encépagement et richesse des assemblages : les atouts de la Vallée du Rhône ». Au programme, un état des lieux de l'encépagement en Vallée du Rhône, ainsi qu'une découverte de deux variétés : le Marselan et le Caladoc sera également organisée.



Poster campaign to promote wine industry

'Coordination Rurale' and Kub' de Com have launched a poster campaign entitled "Leader not dealer" in order to promote the wine industry and give it a new lease of life. The aim is to give the public an insight into the lives of winemakers, who are constantly under pressure to achieve high quality products whilst protecting the environment, and who wish to continue using age-old methods inherited from centuries of tradition and firmly rooted in French culture. Far from encouraging excessive wine consumption, Coordination Rurale and Kub' de Com hope to open up the debate on alcoholism, and advocate sensible drinking via a mature, objective and cultural approach to wine.

High expectations in Burgundy

Harvesting has finished in Burgundy, and wine growers and merchants alike agree that 2005 will be a superb vintage. Every vineyard has produced a harvest of the highest quality, and the atmosphere at the start of wine-making was relaxed. The excellent sanitary state of the grapes, and good weather conditions have allowed for regular fermentation. There is also optimism about the whites with grapes showing a good level of maturity. This, combined with other factors, is set to create wines boasting all the qualities of a great vintage.

Côtes du Rhône primeurs 2005

Three million bottles of Côtes du Rhône primeurs (around 25,000 hl) worth some 9.5 million euros entered the market on 17th November. Côtes du Rhône Primeur wines make up around 1.5% of the region's overall production, making it the second-largest AOC primeur producer in France, after Beaujolais (80% of all AOC primeurs). Most Côtes du Rhône Primeurs wines are drunk locally.

It's Nouveau time !

Wine lovers the world over have been quaffing French AOC Primeur wines since Thursday November 17th, this year's official launch date for some of the country's best-known wines internationally. In an effort to revamp its image and appeal more to younger generations, the Beaujolais trade board has launched a brand new advertising campaign ("It's Beaujolais Nouveau time"). The thrust and the 2005 vintage itself are already being lauded by the French press although in spite of this, the average market price recorded by the trade board has never been lower at 146 euros/hl compared with 160-170 euros/hl in 2004, with cost price in the range of 150 euros/hl. Notwithstanding the recession, ten of millions of bottles of Beaujolais Primeur have been shipped to Japan, the wine's leading export destination in volume terms, and to China where sales events have been organised for the first time in Beijing and Shanghai. Only time will tell whether this be enough to put an end to the crisis.

Drinks in France soon to carry warning labels

Bottles of wine and spirits sold in France could soon have to carry labels warning pregnant women of the dangers of drinking for their unborn baby. The bill, which has already been endorsed by the various ministries concerned, has been submitted to EU authorities in Brussels who have three months in which to express any concerns over its content. Although consumer standards board DGCCRF is refusing to comment on practicalities such as whether the warning label will be carry a logo or be presented in word form, it has said that producers will be given a year in which to comply with the new regulations and will be allowed to sell existing stocks. Although the label will add to the regulatory burden already placed on the wine industry, particularly when sulphite labelling becomes compulsory, the government has managed to push the bill through with relative alacrity. It was initially put forward by the last Health Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy last spring in what was seen by the French wine industry as a tit for tat episode after it had won the right for changes to be made to the notorious 'Loi Evin'.

Potential 2005 French wine harvest estimated at 53.3 million hectolitres

According to forecasts on 1st November 2005 by the Central Office of Statistical Surveys and Studies (SCEES), the 2005 French wine harvest stands at 53.2 million hectolitres; of these 23.7 mhl are appellation wines, 14.3 mhl regional wines, 6 mhl 'other wines', juice and must, and 9.2 mhl base wines for Cognac. The forecasts predict a harvest 10% lower in volume than the 2004 vintage, and 3% below the 5-year average. Every kind of wine is expected to produce a smaller volume than last year. Maximum yields for AOCs were lower than usual in several vineyards this year, and only the Cognac harvest will exceed the 5-year average.

Canadian growers complain over lack of funding

According to the French Economic Commission in Toronto, Canadian wine growers are demanding greater financial support to ward off competition from both New and Old World wines. They also want to dispel the old stereotypes associated with Canadian wine. The Canadian Vintners Association has expressed frustration over the fact that New World regions such as Australia and California, and Old World regions such as France and Italy have large enough budgets at their disposal to finance full time staff, in Canada alone, to promote their wines.

Spain: allocation of funds for restructuring and conversion of vineyards

During the Agriculture and Development Conference which took place on 14th November in Madrid, the Spanish Minister for Agriculture allocated the funds set aside for the conversion and restructuring of vineyards for 2005-2006. Some 151.5 million euros will be used to restructure 21,131 hectares. The funds earmarked for Spain by the European Commission this year are 6 million euros higher than those granted last year, and when added to the 822 million euros already received, they bring Spain's total budget up to 973 million euros. The subsidies should allow for the restructuring of over 155,000 hectares, i.e. 14% of the nation's vineyards.

Beaujolais: 3,000 ha must be pulled up

In order to put an end to overproduction 3,000 hectares of vines must be pulled up, i.e. almost an eighth of the region's vineyards, says trade board Inter Beaujolais. Despite the fact that this year's harvest, estimated at between 1.15 and 1.18 million hectolitres, is significantly smaller than last year (1.302 million hl) this will not be sufficient to balance out excess inventories from previous years. In 2004-2005 only 1.046 million hl of all Beaujolais produced was actually sold, on a par with the previous year (1.057 million hl). 500 ha had already been earmarked for uprooting, but the grant system had not yet been finalised. The trade board is hoping to receive a subsidy of 3,500 euros per hectare from the county council in order to boost the basic European subsidy of 6,300 euros.

Bordeaux: hundreds of wine growers in financial difficulty

Decreasing sales, overproduction and heavy debt : hundreds of wine growers in France's prestigious Bordeaux region are facing serious financial difficulties, and in many instances have no other choice than to file for bankruptcy. As a result of the current crisis the number of wine growers in the region is expected to fall from 10,000 to 5,000 over the next 10 years. All appellations have been affected by the slump, even the most celebrated, such as Médoc and Saint-Emilion. Growers across the region are negatively affected by increased costs and sales which, despite improved quality, fail to pick up.

Du Peloux and Boisset team up

Du Peloux Vineyards (Vaucluse) have decided to join forces with Boisset, la Famille des Grand Vins & Spiritueux (Burgundy), in a merger that was formalised at the end of October. Du Peloux is based in Courthézon and develops and markets wines from the Rhone Valley and Languedoc-Roussillon; its turnover for this year stands at 14 million euros. The company markets more than half of its range abroad and also owns Domaine de Mas de Beaulieu, which produces 330,000 bottles of Vins de Pays d'Oc annually. Burgundy-based shipper Boisset hopes that the merger will enable it to strengthen its already close ties with Rhone Valley vineyards.

Provence Wines form partnership with Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal

As part of the Provence Wine Board's major international promotional campaign, it has formed a partnership with the "Sous le Soleil, Exactement" exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal. Provence wines will thus be promoted for the duration of the exhibition, which is set to continue through to 8th January 2006. A Provence Wine Bistro is holding tastings led by a professional sommelier every weekend, and a selection of Provence wines is being given to visitors by the glass to accompany the provençal menu devised by the Chef du Café.

Spain: FEV publishes study on young people and wine

The Spanish Wine Federation (FEV) commissioned a study of over 1,300 people aged between 18-35 living in towns and cities with populations of 30,000 and above, to find out more about their drinking habits. The results, published on 14th November, show that wine is not a part of daily life for most 18-24 year olds, but becomes increasingly more so as they grow older. Questioned about their drinking habits over the last year, only 11% of participants admitted to drinking wine on a regular basis, whereas 60% preferred soft drinks or bottled water, and 30% chose beer. Although taste was shown to change with age, the young Spaniards questioned felt that they lacked information and education about wine, and would be prepared to drink more wine if they knew more about the regions they were made in and the products themselves.

US : wine consumption rises for eleventh consecutive year

Latest wine industry statistics in the United States leave no doubt that changing consumer preferences are lifting wine to the status of an everyday purchase. According to the recently released 2005 edition of Adams Wine Handbook, the average American drank about 2.73 gallons of table wine last year, an almost 3% gain on the previous year and the eleventh in a row in which substantially more cases were delivered to the nation's retailers and restaurants than the year before. Similar gains are predicted by Adams to at least 2009, the last year for which projections are included. Both long- and short-term trends are positively impacting consumption in the US, including the inexorable mainstreaming of wine through its availability at warehouse clubs and other large retail outlets in many states. Marketing has had an undeniable impact, too. Catchy labels have served to spur popular acceptance of the idea of everyday wine drinking. Moderate prices coupled with technology-driven gains in the quality of everyday wines being brought to market have also helped broaden the customer base. Finally, demographics are making the US into a nation much more amenable to a regular glass of wine than in the past.

CCVF: Risk of suspension of payment

Denis Verdier, chairman of the Federation of French Wine Cooperatives (CCVF), released figures for the 2005 harvest at the end of October which revealed a high quality vintage nationwide and smaller yields, a positive factor in the move towards stabilising the market. Similarly, EU voluntary distillation schemes (Article 29) offer all wine makers outlets for surplus stocks from previous harvests. The downward spiralling of prices of entry-level table wines is expected to end since shippers have agreed to stop buying wines for less than 3 euros per % per hectolitre. The Federation has asked the European Commissioner for Agriculture to ensure that these measures are implemented in all of the wine producing countries within the European Community. Denis Verdier stated that, "if prices do not return to normal, most wine makers will be faced with suspension of payment."

Italy: 'vino novello' pips Beaujolais to the post

Since Saturday 5th November Italians have had the chance to taste the new wines from this year's harvest, which were released in accordance with dates set by the Ministry of Agriculture. Over the next six months an estimated 17 million bottles of 'vino novello' will be quaffed, generating sales worth some 80 million euros. The overall decline in Italian wine production this year means that the volume of new wine available is actually lower than in previous years. "After years of uninterrupted growth, during which production quadrupled over a twenty-year period, 'novello Made in Italy' showed no growth in volume" stated Coldiretti, whilst emphasising that new wines only represent 0.3% of overall production.

French exports fall by 1 million hl

According to data collated by customs, French wine exports from August 2004 to July 2005 totalled 13.7 million hectolitres, divided between 47.5% of appellation wine (6.5 mhl) and 51.5% entry-level table and regional wines (7.1 mhl). 71% of exports were sent to EU countries (9.8 mhl) and 29% to non-EU countries (3.9 mhl). Leading consumer countries are Great Britain (3.035 mhl), Germany (2.431 mhl), Belgium-Luxembourg (1.175 mhl), the Netherlands (1.366 mhl), the USA (938,000 hl), Japan (591,000 hl), Switzerland (560,000 hl), Canada (557,000 hl), Italy (347,000 hl) and Denmark (394,000 hl). A further 508,000 hl were shipped to other EC countries, and 1.275 mhl to non-EU countries. These latest figures reveal a like-for-like decline of almost 1 million hectolitres.